



Undergraduate Media Studies in England: A Discourse Analysis

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Undergraduate Media Studies in England: A Discourse Analysis

by
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Abstract

The aim of this research study is to analyse the nature of undergraduate media studies in England, necessarily from the inside, and document the social practices that constitute the subject in the light of its historic and contemporary challenges and the influence of changing public higher education discourses over the period of the fieldwork, 2012-2013.

Conceptually, media studies is regarded as socially constructed and enacted through discursive practices that reveal the nature of the power relationships that are the basis of the ways 'things get done'. This approach is based on Foucault's (1984, 2002a, 2002b, 2002c) conception of power and discourse and dovetails with a substantial part of the sociology of higher education.

The fieldwork consisted of a series of semi-structured face-to-face interviews with a range of participants drawn from media studies lecturers, other university professionals, media studies graduates and a secondary school headteacher with experience of advising university applicants. This provided examples of discursive practices from both 'inside' and 'outside' media.

The thematic analyses of the data show a complex set of interacting oppositional discourses that are skilfully managed by these professional practitioners to maintain a balance of Foucauldian power. This ensures that public policy changes are assimilated and '*delivered*' whilst sometimes also mitigating their impact and maintaining a prevailing rationale for media studies.

The study concludes by contrasting the findings with the emerging discourses of *Critical University Studies* (CUS). With a declared position (Williams, 2012a) in opposition to higher education public policy reforms, CUS is considered as a set of academic discursive practices that are distinct from the more nuanced balance of oppositional discourses evidenced through the participant responses here.



Contents

	Abstract	ii
	Frontispiece	iii
	Contents	iv
	Acknowledgments	vii
	Definitions and Conventions	viii
I	Introduction	I
1-1	National Policy Context	3
1-2	A Working Definition of the Term ‘media studies’	7
1-3	Media Studies as a ‘Bellwether’	9
1-4	The UK Higher Education Context for Media Studies	11
1-5	The Nature and Scale of Undergraduate Media Studies Provision	15
1-6	Overview of Conceptual and Methodological Framework	27
1-7	Research Questions	28
2	Literature Review	
2-1	Introduction to the Literature Review	31
2-2	Contemporary Media Studies in Higher Education	32
2-3	Media Studies as an Academic Subject	35
2-4	The Emergence of <i>Critical University Studies</i>	49
3	Conceptual Framework	55
3-1	Media Studies: Social Construction and Social Practices	56
3-2	Media Studies: Discourses	60
3-3	Media Studies: Power	62
4	Research Methodology	
4-1	Methodological Framework	65
4-2	Approach to Discourse Analysis	73
4-3	Relationship Between Discourse Analysis and Critical University Studies	79
4-4	Selection of Public Discourse Data	80
4-5	Selection of Participants	82
4-6	The Interview Process	85
4-7	Consideration of Alternative Research Methods	89
4-8	Ethical Considerations	91
4-9	Interviews: Reflexivity	95
4-10	Transcripts: Reflexivity	99
5	Data Analysis – Media Studies: Discourses of identity	
5-1	Introduction	101
5-2	Participant Identity: “I’m probably quite an odd case”	103
5-3	A Rationale for Media Studies: “Quite a tricky question”	113
5-4	Vocational: “Okay, the V-word”	127
5-5	Employability: “A Weasel Word”	135
5-6	Media Industries: “These are the skills that we require”	143
5-7	Transferable Skills: “Killed Bin Laden”	151
6	Data Analysis – Media Studies: Discourses of Academic Practice	
6-1	Introduction	157
6-2	Course Design: “How do you decide what you chuck out?”	159
6-3	Quality Assurance: Aliens, Ghosts and Roundheads	165
6-4	Theory and Practice: “The Woodwork Masters”	177
6-5	Assessment: “Here’s your degree, darling, go”	197
6-6	Collegiality: “I’m sorry. I’m far too busy”	205
6-7	Two Worlds: “I call it reality”	211
6-8	Sector Variations: “Choking over their sherry”	217

7	Data Analysis – Media Studies: Discourses of Public Policy	
7-1	Introduction	225
7-2	Recruitment and Admissions: “Because it’s much more fun”	227
7-3	Advisors: “He said, how about media?”	245
7-4	Tuition Fees: “I think everyone is quite nervous”	251
7-5	Student Experience and Engagement: “At the sharp end”	269
8	Discussion of the Findings and Conclusions	
8-1	Introduction	275
8-2	Summary of Analyses	277
8-3	Limitations of the Study	284
8-4	Conclusions	289
8-5	Contribution to Practice and Suggested Further Investigations	296
	References	299
Appendix 1	Participant Overview	321
Appendix 2	Project Information Sheet for Participants	323
Appendix 3	Interview Consent Form	325
Appendix 4	Example of Interviewer prompts	327
Appendix 5	Faculty Ethics Committee Approval	329
Appendix 6	Example Full Interview Transcript	331

List of Figures

Figure 1-1	Original Course Description, BA Media Studies, 1975	14
Figure 1-2	UK Undergraduate Media Students by Country of Study, 2011-12	18
Figure 1-3	English Undergraduate Media Students by University Mission Group, 2011-12	19
Figure 1-4	Average Number of Media Students per Institution by Mission Group, 2011-12	22
Figure 1-5	Media Course Titles Vocabulary Word Cloud, 2011	24
Figure 5-1	Backpack to Briefcase Poster	116
Figure 5-2	Frontispiece to Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature	116

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Definitions and Conventions

Throughout this study ‘media studies’ (lower case) is used as a general term to denote the broad area of media and communications studies and includes all related areas such as journalism, film studies, radio and television studies etc. Where ‘Media Studies’ refers to a specific course it is capitalised. This is discussed further in Chapter I, Section I-5.

Where a term appears italicised in single quotes, for example ‘*real world*’, then this denotes that the term is being cited as a significant element of the discourse under discussion.

Where a term or phrase appears italicised in double quotes, for example “*knowing how to frame a shot*”, then this indicates a direct quotation from either a secondary source or a participant response.

Blocks of primary data from the participant responses are presented as indented and single-spaced. Where information has been redacted from the participant quotes it has been replaced with a generic term in angular brackets, for example <university>. Where a participant has used an abbreviation this has been expanded in angular brackets, for example, NSS <National Student Survey>.

Chapter One

Introduction

“I definitely agree that people doing media studies or other such degrees that have NO bearing on the economy SHOULD pay higher rates to study! On the other hand, I think these high fees should mean that people doing essential degrees can have theirs subsidised in some way. The government should NOT be paying for people to study art!” (Daily Mail, 12 October 2010)

This reader/writer of the *Daily Mail Online* dramatically and succinctly captures much of the essence of this study. This ‘*below the line*’ comment is an example of an element of a media text that might be studied as part of a media studies course. Yet this specific text is also a response and contribution to a high profile public debate and associated media coverage around seemingly significant changes to English higher education. Media studies is cited as a paradigmatic example in support of their argument.

The aim of this study is to analyse undergraduate media studies in England, necessarily from the inside as the researcher is a media studies academic, and document the social practices that constitute the subject in the light of its historic and contemporary challenges and the influence of changing public higher education discourses over the period of the fieldwork, 2012-13. This provides insight into the nature of the power relationships that underpin the practices of

media studies and where they are in opposition, the tensions between them. The study focuses on undergraduate provision rather than postgraduate programmes as these activities form a significantly smaller part of media studies and operate within different funding regimes and with a distinct demographic profile with more non-EU students undertaking postgraduate study (HESA, 2014). Including these areas would expand the study beyond what is feasible within the constraints of time, resources and thesis length.

In summary, this study brings together elements of the emerging field of *Critical University Studies* (Williams, 2012a) together with a Foucauldian conceptual and methodological approach to analyse the current professional social practices that constitute undergraduate media studies within English higher education institutions.

This introductory chapter focuses on:

- I-1 A survey of the prevalent national policy context for higher education over the period within the scope of the study (2010-2014).
- I-2 A discussion of the term '*media studies*' and the establishment of a working definition for the purposes of this study.
- I-3 The relevance of media studies as a 'bellwether' over this period.
- I-4 A short overview of the development of the English higher education context for media studies.
- I-5 A review of the nature and scale of undergraduate media studies provision in England to set the scope for the study.
- I-6 An overview of the adopted conceptual and methodological framework.
- I-7 The development of specific research questions.

1-1 National Policy Context

This study focuses solely on undergraduate media studies in England. Whilst many aspects of higher education are similar across both the UK and wider international contexts, the increasing impact of UK devolution has resulted in quite different national policy contexts across Scotland, Northern Ireland, Wales and England, particularly in relation to student finance. As the development of English higher education policy has been the most radical and politically controversial, this still leaves scope for a meaningful but clearly defined study.

The fieldwork for this study took place between November 2011 and November 2013, a period that coincided with the mid-years of the parliament elected in May 2010 led by a Coalition government. One of the earliest significant political issues for the Coalition after taking office in May 2010 was the debate and subsequent policy introductions around the funding of students in higher education. With the Browne Review (2010) commissioned by the out-going Labour government in spring 2010, the Liberal-Democrats chose to publically distance themselves from the speculated increase in the student contribution by making a manifesto commitment (Liberal-Democrats, 2010) to oppose any rise in fees and to phase them out completely. This was accompanied by a high-profile campaign culminating in senior Liberal-Democrats (Nick Clegg, Sir Menzies Campbell and Vince Cable) and about 400 other Liberal-Democrat candidates signing a National Union of Students pledge (National Union of Students, 2010) that they would oppose any increase in tuition fees.

With the May 2010 general election resulting in a hung parliament the Liberal-Democrats entered discussions with the Conservative party and formed a Conservative/Liberal Democrat coalition government on 11 May 2010 with Nick Clegg as Deputy Prime Minister and Vince Cable as Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills with overall responsibility for universities. The Conservative David Willetts was appointed Minister of State for Universities and Science. In these unusual circumstances both parties dropped some manifesto commitments and published the result of the post-election negotiations as *The Coalition: Our Programme for Government* (HM Government, 2010). This agreement committed the new coalition to wait for the Browne review to report and to allow Liberal-Democrat MPs to abstain from any parliamentary vote on the raising of tuition fees.

When the Browne Review was published on 12 October 2010 it sparked a frenetic public debate as the first real test of the coalition's coherence. Browne recommended the removal of the cap on tuition fees, up-front loans for students to cover the fees, repayment of loans once the graduate income was greater than £21,000 per year and abolition of up-front fees for part-time students. The government's proposals published on 3 November 2010 (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2010) incorporated many of Browne's recommendations but included a rise in undergraduate tuition fees up to a maximum of £9000 per annum, subject to meeting fair access criteria.

Whilst these proposals represented a significant change for students and higher education providers, they need to be considered against the backdrop of the

Comprehensive Spending Review (HM Treasury, 2010) also published in November 2010. When implemented by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills and the Higher Education Funding Council for England (Higher Education Funding Council for England, 2011) they resulted in, for all practical purposes, the removal from universities of grant funding for the teaching of most subjects (McGettigan, 2013). The proposed increase in fees would offset the loss of recurrent teaching grant income. This major change in the funding of higher education was therefore not a part of the ‘cuts’ discourse surrounding the mainstream acceptance of the desirability of reducing public expenditure. Rather it was a subtler, more ideological, shift of the funding burden from general taxation to students with a clear financial relationship between students, their course and university rather than a shared commitment by the taxpayer (and therefore society as a whole) and the student (McGettigan, 2013). The changes to the university funding regime did not contribute to ‘*deficit reduction*’ in the short-term as public money is used to pay the upfront fees. This will only be partially recovered once the students have graduated and are earning sufficient to start repayment of their loans. This issue is explored in depth in Chapter 7, Section 7-4.

The foregrounding of the funding issue, the resulting brief resurgence in student activism and increased media interest have all served to bring into question the role of universities in UK society and the nature and value of an undergraduate education. Whilst the funding of universities was at least shared between the state and the student then universities retained some obligation to contribute to

the broader society (Collini, 2012). Once funding is almost solely derived from students then universities may narrow their focus to recruiting, retaining and satisfying students. Whilst the state will still be involved in financially underwriting the student loan system, the rhetoric surrounding the move to higher fees focuses on a shift of the cost of a university education from the state to the student. This leads to a discourse of '*student as customer*' and an assumption that, through competition between higher education providers, such relationships will lead to higher quality education at a lower price. The argument is that once students are paying almost all the cost of their studies, they will look more closely at the costs and benefits, be more questioning of the quality of their experience at university and will make an instrumental evaluation of the financial cost of a course against the likely financial benefits of a resulting graduate career (Williams, 2012b).

This leaves the nature and purpose of an undergraduate education open to significant questioning. The framing for this debate has been around the vocational and hence financial value of a degree to the graduate, their employer and the economy (for example, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2010 and 2014). Whilst this emphasis has been growing alongside neo-liberal economics over some years (see, for example, McGettigan, 2013), the stark changes in the balance of funding may escalate the economic value of a degree as a major factor in the decision making of both students and the surrounding stakeholders such as teachers, parents/carers, careers advisors and employers, particularly for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. This instrumental

approach to higher education privileges those subjects with a self-evident vocational outcome: law, medicine, education, social work, those with a direct relationship to business and those that address perceived skills shortages in the economy: science, mathematics, technology, engineering. The most notably absent subjects from these lists are the humanities. The discounting of the contribution these subjects can make to society beyond the utilitarian and a failure to fully recognise the transferable skills developed in these courses has seen a forecasted decline in humanities provision, particularly in post-92 universities (Morgan, 2011) with the future of media studies uncertain. The impact of this is likely to be variable across the background of students. Potentially, only students from relatively privileged backgrounds will have access to the ideas that inform and underpin the ways in which society operates as post-92 universities typically have a more diverse student body in terms of socio-economic and ethnic background.

1-2 A working definition of the term ‘media studies’

To ensure that this study has a defined scope it is important to be clear about the range of higher education provision that is being considered as ‘media studies’. The term is itself problematic and an element of the discourses under investigation and to use the term at all can be seen as implying an ideological position— it is not a neutral phrase and there are no clear boundaries and definitions that allow courses, lecturers and students to be neatly positioned ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ the scope of ‘media studies’.

A number of authors have discussed definitions of '*media studies*' and the associated politics (for example, Caughie and Frith, 1990; Durant, 1991; Cottle, 2003; Couldry, 2009). The rationale for '*media studies*' is considered further through the literature review and an analysis of the primary interview data from the study participants but, for the purposes of scoping and limiting this study, the term '*media studies*' is used to represent the study of a broad range of mass media artefacts, phenomena, institutions and audiences using interdisciplinary approaches that combine disciplines such as history, politics, sociology, psychology and critical theory. This study does not exclude areas such as journalism, radio, television and film studies from the broader term '*media studies*'. It is also used here to be inclusive of a wide range of pedagogic approaches including analytical and theoretical courses as well as courses that focus on the techniques of media production. There are technical and engineering courses that focus on the technologies of media production but these are excluded from this definition of media studies.

There is a blurred boundary between '*media studies*' and '*art and design*' and this is considered as part of the analysis but '*art and design*' is considered to be distinct from '*media studies*' in terms of both pedagogy and curriculum content. Teaching and learning in '*art and design*' is more commonly focused on art studio practice and practice-led assessment and the curriculum is often more concerned with fine art, aesthetics, contextual studies and commercial design in all its forms.

1-3 Media Studies as a ‘bellwether’

It is within this context that ‘media studies’ resides. With its origins in critical theory and a multidisciplinary concentration on a sector of society and the economy rather than a narrow academic discipline, it could be seen as a post-92 solution to the problem of allowing students access to ideas from the humanities whilst still delivering overt vocationalism. However media studies is sometimes portrayed in the media through a discourse of ‘*declining academic standards*’, ‘*dumbing-down*’, ‘*over-recruitment*’ and poor graduate employment opportunities, labelled by David Buckingham (2014, p.7) as the “*discourse of derision*”.

It is within this political context that the provision of media courses takes place. Whilst the Quality Assurance Agency benchmark statements (QAA, 2008) provide a starting point for curriculum design, the multidisciplinary nature of the subject, varying student backgrounds, different institutional contexts and varying approaches to industry practice and employability lead to quite radically different course designs within different universities. It is this richness and diversity that provides the substance to this research study. From public discourses there appear to be significant tensions amongst the stakeholders that are not always fully resolved. These tensions are manifested in public discursive practices, for example, ‘*creative industries*’, ‘*employability*’, ‘*vocational*’, ‘*student as customer*’, ‘*a degree for watching television*’, ‘*out there in the real world*’, ‘*theory and practice*’, ‘*student experience*’, ‘*tick boxes*’ etc. Underlying these relationships are ideological positions and relative power and therefore when viewed as the expression of

power through language it becomes the study of discourses, a position that is explored in greater depth in Chapter Three.

The study consisted of an analysis of both publically available documentary evidence and the transcripts from semi-structured interviews with nineteen participants, selected because of their relevance to the discursive practices of media studies. Through these interviews participants were encouraged to share their perspective on the ways these issues impact on professional practices and these were analysed alongside relevant public higher education discourse evidence and the associated academic literature.

The data from these interviews were then analysed to ascertain the significant themes with the aim of identifying emerging discourses of media studies, higher education and their interactions. This then leads to conclusions that point to a balance of Foucauldian power through oppositional discourses that do not conform to a premise that recent reforms of higher education have had a wholly negative impact on the academy. This contrasts with a discourse of ‘*apocalypse*’ that characterises *Critical University Studies* (Williams, 2012a).

1-4 The UK Higher Education Context for Media Studies

A long-view history of the development of higher education within the UK can appear to show a general trend towards expansion with a break out from its medieval origins characterised by expanding numbers of institutions, students, teachers and researchers, often in waves as a response to governmental initiatives and fuelled by an expansion of secondary education which increased the expectations and aspirations of an increasing number of matriculating pupils (Stevens, 2005). Never afraid to restructure, sub-divide, categorise and colonise, the higher education sector has always spawned new ways of classifying knowledge using terms such as *field*, *discipline* and *subject* (Becher and Trowler, 2001). Sometimes these reflect developments in epistemology or research breakthroughs but they can also be driven by the fashions and economic concerns of the times and the history of the institutional development of the departments involved. In a discussion designed to show that academic disciplines across the sciences and humanities show greater similarity than difference Collini (2012, p.62) observes that;

“All kinds of distinctions can be drawn among various disciplines in terms of method, subject-matter, outcomes, and so on, but these distinctions do not all map neatly on to one another so as to fall into two mutually exclusive groups. And all disciplines involve, ultimately, a similar drive towards open-ended understanding, so, for that reason, all disciplines have a stake in the well-being of the university.”

This partitioning of knowledge, skills, methods and subject-matter into disciplines and their embodiment in institutional structures and programmes of education is arbitrary and the boundaries are easily contested. Having created these artificial

divides, the academy can then make a virtue of bridging them through the explicit promotion of interdisciplinary and cross-disciplinary working.

As each new wave of expansion or consolidation occurs together with an associated shift in academic disciplines there is often a revisiting of the most fundamental of questions around higher education; what is it?; what is it for?; who is it for?; and whatever higher education is, how should it be embodied institutionally, what is a university?

Not only do these questions reappear at regular intervals but so do many of the possible answers. A striking feature of the history of UK higher education is that many of the current debates around the nature of higher education are not new but are revisiting similar questions and are resulting in similar answers to those that emerged from earlier periods of change. For example,

“And it must be recognised that in our own times, progress - and particularly the maintenance of a competitive position - depends to a much greater extent than ever before on skills demanding special training. A good general education, valuable though it may be, is frequently less than we need to solve many of our most pressing problems.” (Robbins, 1963, p.6)

Although this quote is from the Robbins Report of 1963, the sentiments expressed could be seen as representative of many of the subsequent reviews of higher education up to the present.

Recurrent questions include the role of higher education in relation to the personal development of students, social cohesion and citizenship and the

relationship between higher education and economic needs. As these questions arise and are debated within the public sphere by succeeding generations it becomes clear that if there ever was a pure, romantic, golden age of universities where knowledge and understanding has been pursued for its own sake and freely and benevolently passed to successive generations of students, eager to expand their thinking and contribute to society, then it was only experienced by a very few privileged people. At the outset of his account of the politics of higher education in the UK, Stevens notes John Ruskin's observation that "revivals are of things that never existed" (Stevens, 2005, p.6).

Taking a long view, the history of English higher education can be considered synonymous with the history of Oxford and Cambridge. Scottish higher education developed fairly independently from its origins at St. Andrews, Edinburgh and Glasgow. In the last 200 years higher education has fragmented and expanded into the diverse and complex range of institutions and practices that constitute the current provision. Since the mid-nineteenth century, new universities have been created with the aim of reaching additional kinds of students, either socially or geographically, with new and economically significant subject areas. Some members of the current Russell Group trace their origins back to the growth of regional industrial centres, such as Birmingham, Leeds and Manchester, that characterised the industrial revolution. Russell Group institutions such as Warwick, Exeter and Southampton are products of later waves of expansion in higher education as various colleges grew and obtained a charter and degree awarding powers. Whilst many older universities have made

research excellence and the high quality teaching of selective undergraduate intakes the focus of their mission, more recent additions to the university sector have sometimes focussed on other niches such as education for business and the professions and the teaching of more diverse intakes.

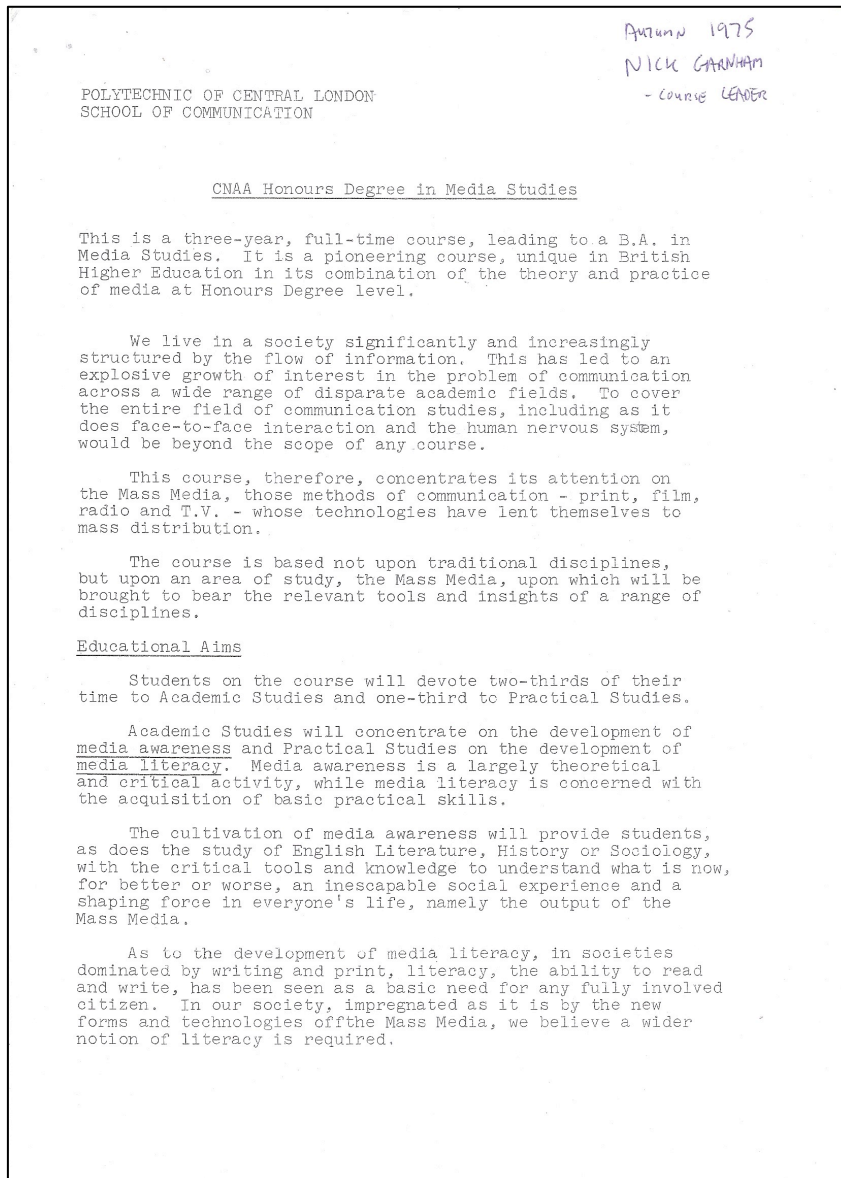


Figure I-1 – Original Course Description for Students – BA(Hons) Media Studies, Polytechnic of Central London, 1975 (Garnham, 1975)

It is within this context that media education has emerged and developed from the 1970s to the present day. The BA(Hons) Media Studies course launched in the autumn of 1975 by the School of Communication at the Polytechnic of Central London (now the University of Westminster) and awarded by the Council for National Academic Awards (CNAA) is widely acknowledged as the first recognisable UK undergraduate Media Studies degree. Led by Nick Garnham, this new degree informed potential students that:

“The course is based not upon traditional disciplines, but upon an area of study, the Mass Media, upon which will be brought to bear the relevant tools and insights of a range of disciplines” (Garnham, 1975)

and;

“The cultivation of media awareness will provide students, as does the study of English Literature, History or Sociology, with the critical tools and knowledge to understand what is now, for better or worse, an inescapable social experience and a shaping force in everyone’s life, namely the output of the Mass Media” (ibid.)

1.5 The nature and scale of undergraduate media studies provision

Building on the definition of ‘media studies’ (see above), the scale and character of the provision needs to be established to ensure that the discourse data obtained from the participants is a legitimate indicator of the breadth of practices that constitute English undergraduate media studies. The backgrounds of the participants can be mapped against the provision to legitimise their contributions.

Reflecting the relative age of the subject as an area of academic study, the diversity of the media industries and the multidisciplinary approaches that underpin them, undergraduate media courses across the UK vary considerably.

Aspects of the mass media are studied within institutions from all the main university mission groups, HE in FE colleges, private-sector providers, large universities and small specialist institutions. The subject matter can cover all elements of the mass media: film, television, newspapers, books, magazines, radio, social media, virtual and augmented reality and mobile media. Some courses are highly specialised and focused on a particular area of the media or a particular industry role. Other courses provide a general survey of the media and draw out the similarities and underlying principles that apply across all media forms. There are also variations in pedagogic approach. Some courses emphasise the theoretical and analytical aspects of media studies whilst others lead with professional media practice. Others combine the two, using theory to inform practice and vice versa. Organisationally, media courses are often located within departments that specialise in the media but they can also be found co-located with or subsumed within areas such as English, social sciences, humanities, business or technology.

Although media course provision is rich and diverse, there are patterns that emerge. The Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) reports overall student numbers within broad groupings (JACS – Joint Academic Coding System) with some breakdown into more specific areas. The process by which courses are allocated to JACS codes is somewhat arbitrary but it does provide a way of looking at the distribution of courses and students across UK higher education. For the year 2011-12 (the first year covered by the fieldwork aspect of this study), HESA report (2014) that there were 39,910 full-time first-degree

students studying courses in *Mass Communications and Documentation*. This is from a total UK population of 1,312,115 students giving around three per cent within this category – media studies has high public visibility but actually represents a quite small proportion of total higher education provision, particularly in relation to the economic significance of the creative industries within the overall UK economy (£71.4 billion, 5.2 per cent Gross Value Added in 2012 (DCMS, 2014)). *Mass Communications and Documentation* includes subjects such as information services but is dominated by courses in media studies (25,310 students) and journalism (10,100 students). Some media courses, particularly if they have a practice focus, may be categorised as *Creative Arts and Design* by HESA. There were 139,165 students in this area in 2011-12 (HESA, 2014), mostly in design studies, drama and fine art although 18,405 were studying cinematics or photography courses. By contrast, the largest subject cluster in UK universities is *Business and Administrative Studies* with 180,995 students - 13.8 per cent of the total. The University and Colleges Admission Service (UCAS, 2011) listed a total of 177 UK institutions offering undergraduate higher education courses in media areas for students wishing to start a course in September 2013. Of these, twenty were at institutions based in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland and so are excluded from the scope of this study.

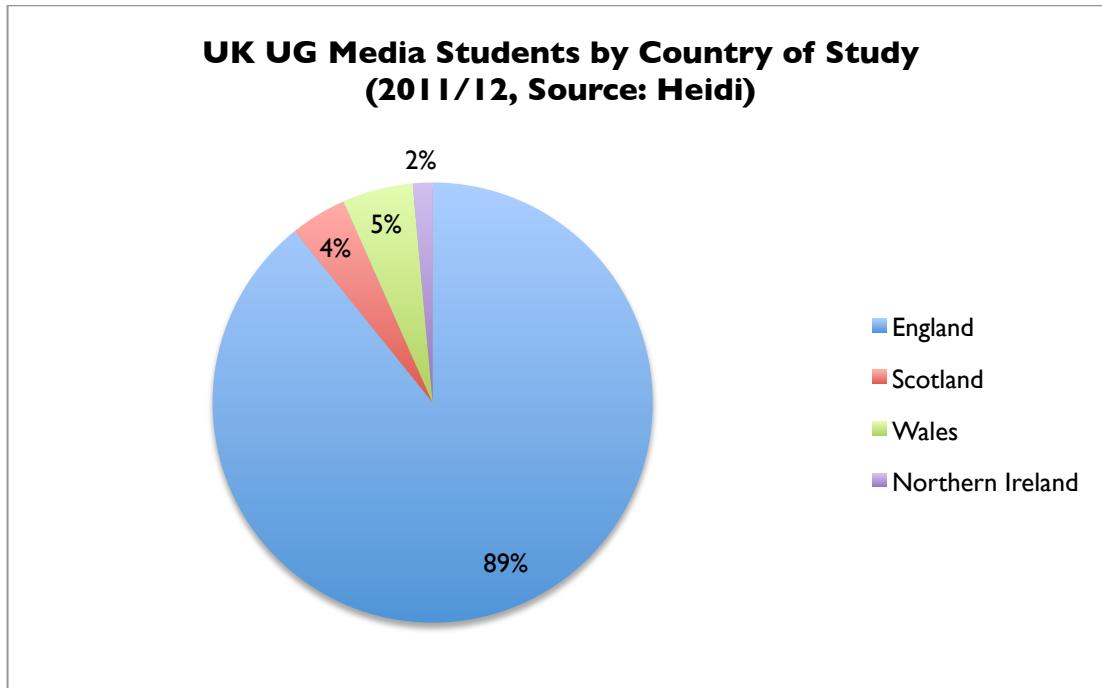


Figure 1-2 – UK Undergraduate Media Students by Country of Study (2011-12, Source: Higher Education Information Database for Institutions (HEIDI))

Figure 1-2 uses data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA, 2014).

HESA provides detailed student data to institutions through the Higher Education Information Database for Institutions (HEIDI) system. This data includes the number of students studying *Mass Communications and Documentation* (JACS Code P) at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels at each institution. What emerges is a picture of the range of institutions delivering media courses and the concentrations of student numbers. In particular, this chart shows the distribution of student numbers across the countries of the UK. Excluding Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland from this study following the divergence of higher education policy in these countries after devolution does simplify the study but it can still cover the provision accessed by almost ninety per cent of UK media students.

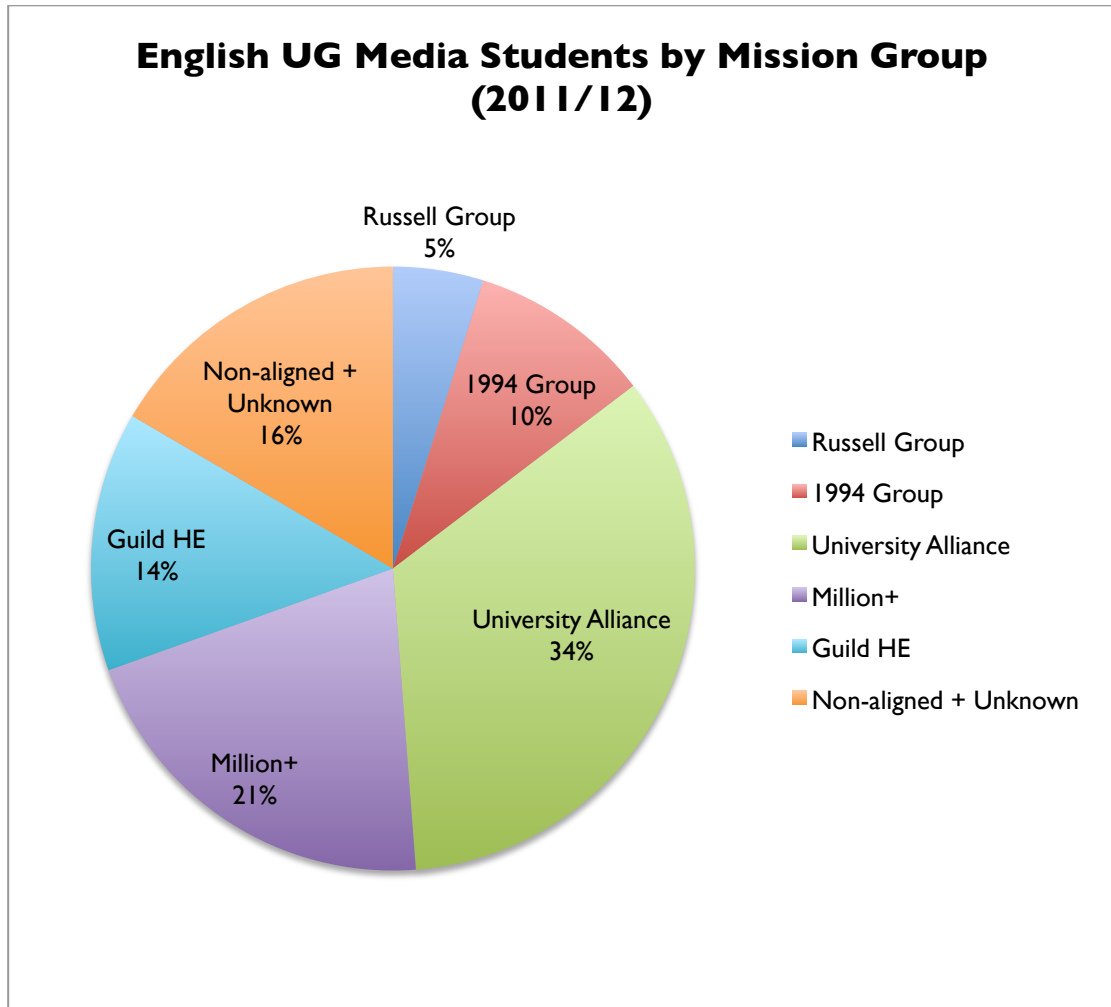


Figure 1-3 – English Undergraduate Media Students by University Mission Group (2011-12, Source: Higher Education Information Database for Institutions (HEIDI, HESA, 2014))

When considering media higher education provision in England the institutional context is likely to be significant and so there is value in considering the range of institutions offering media courses and how they may be categorised. A simple way is to look at the institutional membership of the various university mission group organisations. Whilst it is straightforward to identify mission group membership (or its absence), some caution is required as this process of self and peer identification is somewhat opaque and the reasons universities have for opting to join (and sometimes change) particular mission group are complex.

There are also a significant and increasing number of mainstream higher education providers who maintain a non-aligned position.

The mission group taxonomy has collapsed further following the period covered by the study fieldwork with the demise of the 1994 Group. However, as a way of thinking about the universities that deliver the bulk of English media higher education over the period covered by this study, a categorisation by mission group does have some value. Figure 1-3 demonstrates that over half of the students are studying in Million+ (2014) or University Alliance (2014) institutions. These are predominantly post-1992 universities with a heritage derived from the polytechnics and colleges of higher education. A further fourteen per cent of students are studying at institutions that are members of GuildHE (2013). In defining its brand, GuildHE notes that *“Many member institutions share key characteristics, specialist mission or subject focus, being smaller than the average university in the UK but some being major providers in professional subject areas...”* (ibid.). Whilst these institutions might be small, their specialist nature means that some have very large concentrations of media students, for example, Ravensbourne.

In contrast to the concentration of students in the Million+/University Alliance/GuildHE institutions, only fifteen per cent of undergraduate media students were in the research-intensive Russell or 1994 groups. There are a significant number of institutions that were not members of any mission group. The chart shows this as a combination of two groups. The institutions categorised as non-aligned are those that have publically reported themselves as

taking a non-aligned stance, rather than assuming non-alignment on the basis of an absence from the mission groups. The 'unknowns' are institutions that do not appear in any mission group membership but have not been publically reported as positively adopting a non-aligned position. Whilst it is useful to maintain this distinction in the data, for the purposes of this study it is reasonable to regard all these institutions as unaffiliated to any of the five mainstream mission groups. As might be expected, the non-aligned group is an eclectic collection of institutions but it does include some universities with significant populations of undergraduate media students such as the Universities of Derby (300) and Gloucestershire (230) and one of the most historically important providers, the University of Westminster with 650 undergraduate media students. However, the general pattern within the non-aligned institutions matches that observed across the mission groups; few pre-1992 universities have significant numbers of undergraduate media students.

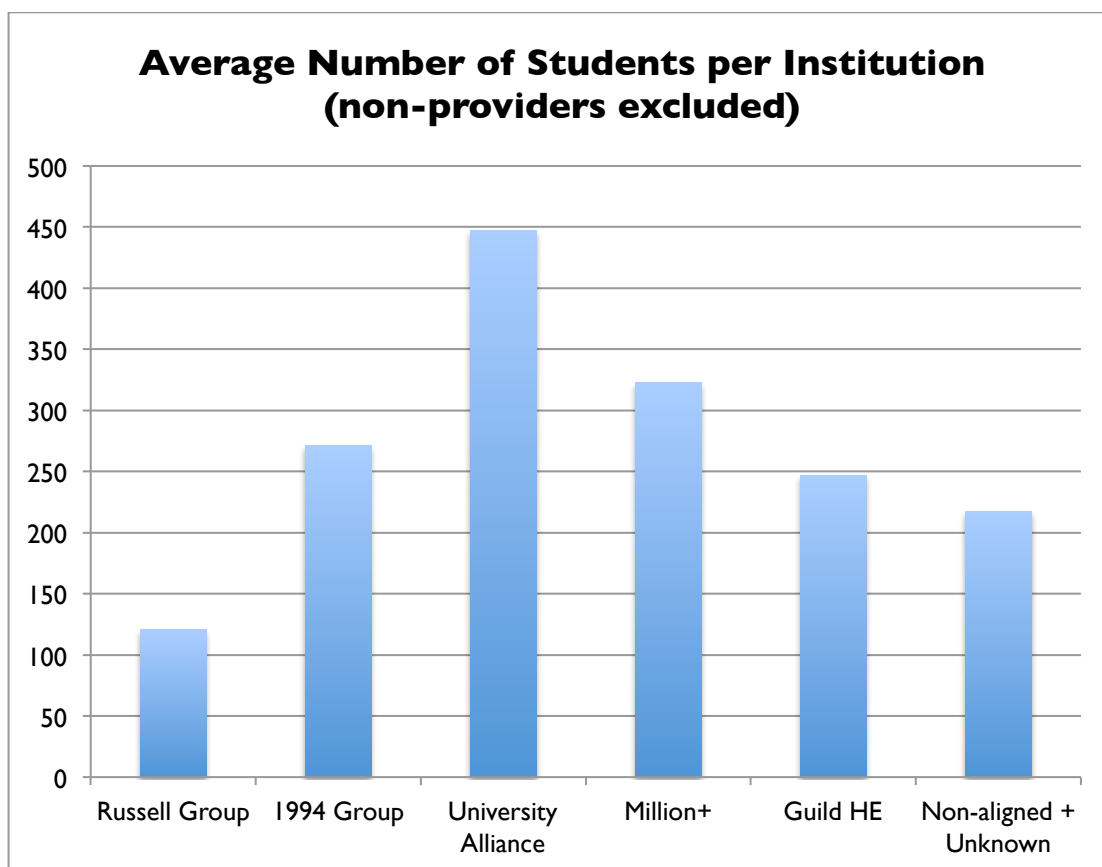


Figure I-4 – Average Number of Media Studies students per institution by University Mission Group (2011-12, Source: Higher Education Information Database for Institutions (HEIDI) (HESA, 2014)

Having identified the distribution of student population across the mission groups it is then possible to consider the average size of the provision and how this varies across the mission groups. This can be regarded as a proxy measure of the overall level of institutional activity in the area and as a possible indication of the size of the department(s) involved. Figure I-4 shows the mean number of undergraduate media students at institutions within the indicated mission groups. Institutions with no media provision have been excluded before calculating the mean. This further analysis is important as it shows that undergraduate media provision is quite concentrated rather than thinly and evenly distributed across all the institutions in a mission group. The chart shows that undergraduate media

education is concentrated in fairly large departments within the Million+/University Alliance/GuildHE mission groups. Where there was undergraduate provision in Russell Group and 1994 Group institutions, it tended to be in smaller departments.

Whilst the HEIDI data gives a good picture of the distribution of undergraduate media education it does not entirely reflect the way in which this provision is delivered. The UCAS website for applicants (UCAS, 2011) showed that there were 157 providers of undergraduate media courses in England. Of these, 68 were colleges rather than universities. This reflects the concentration of industry and business-focused two-year foundation degree qualifications in colleges..

Where colleges offer higher education qualifications (FHEQ level four and above) these are normally done in partnership with an institution that has degree-awarding powers (typically a university) or through a national awarding body such as Edexcel. On this basis, it can be argued that staff teaching media in colleges have less influence over course and curriculum development than their counterparts in universities. Nevertheless, they are clearly an important factor in the delivery of media higher education and so were included within the scope of this study.

diversity of provision. A few words dominate the titles alongside *media* and *studies*. *Production* and *Creative* are very common, probably intending to communicate a focus on practical activities producing media artefacts. Interestingly, the word *Digital* is also very common. It may be that this term is intended to signify modernity and relevance although, given that media production technologies have been overwhelmingly digital for decades and very few courses specialise in analogue media (for example, celluloid-based photography and film courses are increasingly unusual and could be seen as a niche provision) it is often rather redundant. The terms *Film*, *Journalism* and *Communication(s)* indicate major areas within media studies and may be considered as significant sub-categories, largely derived from the ways in which media studies has developed historically. Film studies pre-dates media studies and is often considered a development of the application of critical theories from English Literature as cinema emerged as a dominant art form over the twentieth century, later drawing on ideas from areas such as Freudian and then Jungian and Post-Jungian psychoanalysis. Journalism also has its own traditions of education and training and its own history of transition from something seen as a craft skill to an area of undergraduate study and a graduate profession. Currently faced with significant challenges from the changing economics of the newspaper industry and existential angst (for example, Curran, 2010) over the emergence of social media and user-generated content, journalism courses are generally engaging with the broader issues of media studies whilst also addressing the need to prepare students for much more multi-disciplinary roles in the industry rather

than employment in the conventional roles of reporter, feature writer or sub-editor.

Communication(s) is also a significant term within course titles. Communication studies is another area of study that pre-dates media studies. This is generally a broader area of study that includes topics such as quantitative theories of communication with the work of Shannon and Weaver (1949) often featuring. This work largely originated in the USA and Communication Studies can be viewed as more American than European (for example, Fiske, 1990). A factor in the development of UK course titles is the need to appeal not just to UK home students but also to both non-UK EU students and non-EU students looking to study in the UK. These students form an important part of most university communities and are a significant revenue stream for many institutions. This means that course titles must be recognisable and attractive to potential students across the world if UK universities are to compete in a global higher education market. For example, courses designed with an international market in mind might be called *Mass Communications* rather than *Media Studies*.

More generally, the course title visualisation features an eclectic range of terms that appear less frequently. A study of the media is often combined with another subject. This can be partly attributed to some university undergraduate schemes that are based around credit accumulation and allow students to freely combine subjects to produce a potentially huge number of combinations. However it still illustrates how diverse media courses can be and how they can be combined with many other areas of academic study. In capturing and analysing the

discourses around media studies it is important to recognise the richness of the provision and to ensure that any evidencing of these discourses takes account of the varying nature of media courses across the sector.

1.6 Overview of Conceptual and Methodological Framework

The provision of media studies courses in higher education involves complex processes that are influenced by many factors that range from overt policy directives to subtler interactions. There are broad national and international drivers interacting with very specific local contexts. These drivers may often be in tension with seemingly little agreement regarding what constitutes a successful outcome. Any study of these processes needs to frame them and be clear about the assumptions that are being made.

For the purposes of this study, media studies is regarded as a cluster of social practices. Courses are influenced by, developed, designed and implemented by people playing specific formal or less-well defined informal roles. Within the culture of higher education, there is a presumption of collective responsibility for academic matters; policy committees, examination boards, approval panels and constructed course teams, for example. Analysing the operation of these social practices involves capturing the perceptions of the participants, their relationships with the collective entities and the communication between them. There are specific social norms that operate within academic communities and although these are changing and are more complex than the popular stereotypes of academics would suggest, there are distinct modes of interaction within

universities that influence the ways in which courses are constituted as social practices. By comparing and contrasting the perceptions of individuals with the evidence from public higher education and media studies discourses some insight into the nature of the processes emerges. The emphasis on analysing discourses does give rise to the interesting phenomenon of a common media studies technique being applied to a study of media education. However, with a focus on the social aspects of language and communication and an assumption that Foucauldian power relationships underpin the practices of media studies, it follows, based on the rationale established in Chapter Three, that a form of discourse analysis would be the most appropriate analytical tool.

1-7 Research Questions

This research study is based on the premise that English higher education has been undergoing a significant, if not unprecedented, level of change that has led to both internal and public sphere debates around the nature and purpose of higher education (Collini 2012, Whelan *et al.* 2013, McGettigan 2013). Further, the nature of media studies has put it at the heart of this seemingly contested space (Buckingham, 2014) and therefore a consideration of the purpose and practices of media studies may be indicative of the impact of these changes on UK higher education in general. The purpose of this study is to explore and characterise the social practices that constitute media studies as a means of questioning some of the narratives emerging under the banner *Critical University Studies* (Williams, 2012a).

On this basis, the initial research questions that this study seeks to address are:

1. How are media studies courses conceived in terms of public and academic discourses? What does this indicate about the purpose and value of media studies and how does this relate to the associated professional practices?
2. What do the discursive practices of media studies reveal of the power relationships operating across media studies? How do media studies participants manage oppositional discourses?
3. How do the outcomes of this study relate to the existing and emerging research literature? How does this project relate to the emerging work that is being labelled *Critical University Studies*?
4. To what extent are the conclusions of this study applicable to higher education beyond media studies and do they have useful implications for academic professional practice?

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2-1 Introduction

This chapter is a review of the academic literature relevant to the study. It provides a background to the work that follows and provides a broad overview within which to contextualise the findings and site them within current developments in the relevant areas of education research.

The review considers three main bodies of literature:

2-2 *Contemporary Media Studies in Higher Education: A survey of current higher education and government policy literature that sets the context for the practices of media studies and the commentaries provided by the associated analytical work.*

2-3 *Media Studies as an Academic Subject: This review tracks the development of media studies as an area of academic study from Leavis to the present and highlights the recurrent contentious themes and debates that inform the development of this study.*

2-4 *The Emergence of Critical University Studies*: This is an emergent area of education research that has acquired some traction during the course of this study (Williams, 2012a). Although the label is new, the concerns of researchers in this area are not and this section of the literature review looks at the themes now labeled as critical university studies and tracks their development from Newman to the present. This is important to the development of the conclusions to this study as the findings can be seen as a contribution to critical university studies but with a distinctive set of discursive practices.

A review of the literature covering discourse, discourse analysis and Foucault's approach to power forms part of Chapter Three, Conceptual Framework.

2-2 Contemporary Media Studies in Higher Education

"Modern economies are knowledge based and universities are central to how we prepare for that. They do this directly in the case of science, maths, engineering, computer science, medicine, modern languages, and professional services like business studies and accounting. Even much maligned 'media studies' helps to feed one of Britain's most rapidly growing and successful industries." (Cable, 2010)

In the UK, undergraduate media courses are concentrated in the post-1992 universities and their partner institutions (UCAS, 2011). This locates them within the wider debates around the role, funding and accountability of UK universities. The origins of this debate can be traced (Stevens, 2005) from the significant increase in the proportion of university income provided by the state following the 1944 Education Act, through the expansion of the 1960s and the market-based ideological shift of the 1980s to the radical changes in student and

university finance introduced by New Labour and extended by the Coalition, as discussed in Chapter One. These have been accompanied by the rhetoric, if not quite the reality yet, of the market and commodified processes— the university as business enterprise, the student as fee-paying customer and a focus on short-term graduate employment prospects as the '*value proposition*'.

It is this evolution of higher education public policy together with wider social, political and economic trends that have facilitated and constrained the development of media as an academic subject. In particular, the *Cox Review of Creativity in Business* (Cox, 2005), the *Leitch Review of Skills* (Leitch, 2006) and the Department of Culture, Media and Sport's *Creative Britain Report* (DCMS, 2008) have highlighted the significance of the media as an element of the creative industries and therefore of national economic significance. This is an element of the perceived need to respond to '*globalisation*' and to improve '*competitiveness*'. This public policy agenda has allowed universities to justify the value of media courses by placing particular emphasis on the practical production work elements that appear to be there to prepare students for immediate employment in the media industries. In a competitive market for students, universities have felt compelled to respond to significant negative coverage (Frean, 2008; Paton, 2008) of media courses within the mass media itself and have grasped the evidence around the national and personal economic benefits of the creative/cultural industries as a way of legitimatising the provision of media courses.

"I feel the experience of the TV Production module more than any other has given me a REAL idea of what the TV industry is really like. We were given guidance by professionals and I am now confident that I can work in a studio situation. It has been amazing and I have learned more than I could have possibly imagined." (University of Bedfordshire, 2011)

This is taken from advertising material for a Television Production course and is a direct quotation from a student studying the course. The selection of this to represent the course to prospective students shows that the relationship of the course to the television industry through practice-based learning is seen as a positive selling point by some.

However, this rhetoric is not uncontested. Pratt (2005) unpacks the definitions of terms that are sometimes used interchangeably such as '*creative industries*', '*cultural industries*' and '*cultural sector*'. He traces the origins of these terms to the incoming New Labour administration of 1997 and the re-branding of the Department of National Heritage as the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). Pratt goes on to argue that this process was a deliberate attempt to position New Labour as distinctly centrist and distanced from the Old Labour cultural strategies associated with the Greater London Council. This led to the DCMS creating a Creative Industries Task Force that defined the creative industries as:

"Those activities that have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the general exploitation of intellectual property" (DCMS, 2001, p.5).

This definition clearly privileges the economic aspects of creative practice and ignores the more complex social, political and cultural themes that, together with critical textual analysis, are the traditional preoccupations of an academic

study of the media (Alvarado *et al.*, 1987). The emphasis on individual creativity also seems to be at odds with the media industries reliance on teams of people to create media artefacts. This can be seen as providing course development teams with what appear to be alternative rationales for a media course; is the inclusion of practical production elements within the curriculum a means of making the course more vocational or is it a pedagogic technique designed to enhance students' engagement with critical and conceptual disciplines (Geraghty, 2002)? A conventional response to this is that a media course serves both these purposes (Williams, 1981). However, this can leave hidden tensions as media practices that are currently seen as acceptable, or at least necessary, within the current industry may be questionable when subjected to the critical, political, sociological, philosophical and ethical analysis that form theoretical frameworks for analysing mass media phenomena (Franklin, 2012).

2-3 Media Studies as an Academic Subject

"Education has also had to struggle for the attention of its own audiences in school and college classrooms. This has sometimes involved teachers appointing themselves as moral guardians, contesting the media and their baleful influences, especially on the young and on the male working class. At other times teachers have used the media to lend chalky traditions a hi-tech gloss. These essentially contradictory engagements between education and the media still take place, but the last twenty-five years have seen more rigorously considered media studies develop in further and higher education and in primary and secondary schools." (Alvarado *et al.*, 1987, p.2).

Although written in 1987 and displaying some of the concerns of the times, Alvarado *et al.* have captured some of the complexity of the relationships between education and the media. Pedagogic practice in schools and universities has evolved to embrace the media whilst the media have emerged as a

worthwhile area of academic study. Tracing the origins and history of these relationships leads to an ever-widening circle of influences.

The threads traced through the history of media education in the UK by a number of observers generally all lead back to a common starting point in the work of the literary critic, Leavis. The publication of *Culture and Environment: The Training of Critical Awareness* by Leavis and his student, Thompson, in 1933 is widely considered (for example, Masterman 1985; Buckingham 1998) to be an early proposal for teaching about the "media" following the emergence of the term in the 1920s (Merriam-Webster, 2011) as a singular collective noun representing the traditional "press"— newspapers and magazines together with radio and film. Whilst *Culture and Environment* did offer an early structured approach to media education and was very influential until the 1960s (Masterman, 1985) it is now seen as anachronistic and somewhat paternalistic as it sought to provide English teachers with tools to defend 'civilisation' from the damaging effects of the mass media on the working classes. As such, the influence of Leavis can still be traced through to the continuing moral panics around media effects. The tone of Leavis' work can be gauged from the opening (researcher's emphasis):

"Many teachers of English who have become interested in the possibilities of **training taste and sensibility** must have been troubled by accompanying doubts. What effect can such training have against the **multitudinous counterinfluences**— films, newspapers, advertising— indeed the whole world outside the classroom?" (Leavis, 1933, p.1)

Although this approach has been heavily criticised by later generations of media academics, it did leave a positive legacy through a legitimising of the critical study

of media texts. Leavis and Thompson presented many examples from popular culture as part of their argument and it is this that showed the way forward for media education. They drew on examples of advertisements as a way of thinking about the 'negative' effects of the media on the working classes. Whilst it now seems easy to dismiss Leavis and Thompson, their approach does leave a perpetual question for media education. Whilst no one seriously argues for the overt promotion of privileged high culture over popular culture as a declared aim of media education there may still be an implied promotion of a more complex set of cultural and political values disguised as critical analysis. Media education never occurs in isolation from its social, economic and political context, even though that context changes. The discourses of media education are just as ideological as any others.

A significant paradigm shift occurred in the 1960s with the perception that popular culture could possess a richness that was worth studying in a more balanced way than that proposed by Leavis and Thompson. Buckingham (1998) attributes this to Williams and Hoggart. Williams (1961) opposed the idea of culture as a received canon of favoured texts and promoted a more anthropological approach that broke down the barriers between arts and everyday life. This evolution in cultural theory was applied to media education by Hall and Whannel in *Popular Arts* (1964). According to Masterman (1985), this influential work helped shape the development of media studies during the 1960s by shifting the debate on from an elitist approach to a discussion of how the media interacts with the rest of society and what the consequences of this interaction might be:

"In terms of actual quality ... the struggle between what is good and worthwhile and what is shoddy and debased is not a struggle against the modern forms of communication but a conflict within these media." (Hall and Whannel, 1964, p.X)

Whilst this was a clear departure from Leavis, Hall and Whannel still maintained a somewhat hierarchical framework by privileging art cinema over popular cinema and privileging cinema over television which they regarded as merely an inferior form of cinema rather than a medium worth studying in its own right. This hierarchy can be traced back to Hoggart (1959) as he was rather dismissive of American 'processed' popular culture in general and Hollywood cinema in particular. For Hoggart, the living culture of the industrial working classes had a greater authenticity and hence legitimacy.

As the intellectual framework of media education developed through the 1960s this was reflected in institutional developments. The first chair in film studies at a UK university (London) was established in 1961. Richard Hoggart became the first director of The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at Birmingham University in 1964. Stuart Hall took over in 1969 and led the Centre through the 1970s. The Centre for Mass Communication Research was established at Leicester University in 1966. These were still primarily research-focused units.

Masterman (1985) sees the *Society for Education in Film and Television* as the focus for developments in media education in the 1970s. Through the publication of two journals, *Screen* and *Screen Education*, the society brought together both theoretical developments in media studies and the application of these developments to media curricula. Some commentators (for example, Alvarado et

al., 1993) and Boyd-Barratt (1997) have noted that this second aim was not always realised and it is interesting to consider whether this separation into two journals was indicative of an unhelpful and enduring false dichotomy between research and teaching that has only more recently been explicitly addressed through various Research Informed Teaching (RiT) initiatives (Haslett, 2009).

This period in the development of media studies through the work of the *Society for Education in Film and Television (SEFT)* and the *British Film Institute (BFI)* has been extensively documented by Terry Bolas (2009). Bolas portrays this as a turbulent time populated with passionate and dedicated characters who have collectively influenced the development of media studies in the UK and beyond ever since.

The crux of this conflict is summarised by Nowell-Smith (2006) as a clash between grassroots activists and BFI members promoting new ideas (“*most noticeably the explosive conjunction of Marxism and semiotics*” (ibid., p.458)) and a reactionary, anti-intellectualism amongst the BFI senior management and governing body. Bolas’ forensic account includes details of the Soho public houses and restaurants frequented by SEFT staff and, in the case of the Helvetia Public House, he notes that “*the SEFT activists would repair there after meetings but sit in cabals at different tables in order further to continue the arguments of the meetings or to ‘lick their wounds’*” (Bolas, 2009, p.195).

Geoffrey Nowell-Smith (2006) was part of a British Film Institute (BFI) members’ action group that challenged the BFI Governors at the annual general meeting in December 1970. This was a reflection of a growing split within the BFI regarding the overall direction of the Institute with some seeing it as undemocratic, overly-

conservative and too subservient to the film industry. The action group was defeated at the Annual General Meeting and in a postal ballot and so a strengthened governing body continued with its policies. In 1971 a review of the BFI's Education Department led by Asa Briggs, the Vice-Chancellor of Sussex University, was critical of the Department's emphasis on research and theoretical work around film culture at the cost of supporting film studies and the teachers of film in schools. This ultimately resulted in the resignation of the Head of the Education Department, Paddy Whannel, and five other staff members. This episode has proved highly significant as, at that time, the Society for Education in Film and Television, the British Film Institute and the emergent university film and media departments and courses were highly connected through a relatively small group of individuals, many of whom acquired significant reputations as media lecturers and researchers as they moved between institutions. For example, Paddy Whannel taught at Northwestern University, Illinois after leaving the BFI, Geoffrey Nowell-Smith joined the then University of Luton and moved on to Queen Mary, University of London. Christine Geraghty, a member of the SEFT executive in 1975 subsequently moved to posts at the University of Glasgow and Goldsmiths, University of London and Peter Wollen took up a BFI-funded lectureship at the University of Essex in 1975. The secretary of SEFT and editor of *Screen Education*, Manuel Alvarado taught at West Surrey College of Art and Design, the University of Luton and City University.

David Bordwell and Kristin Thompson were visitors to SEFT in 1976 and are now associated with their introductory text book, first published in 1993, *Film*

Art: An Introduction (2012) that is now in its tenth edition and remains a common set text for introductory film studies. Issues from those times such as the relationship between 'theory' and 'practice' (Bolas, 2009) are still relevant to contemporary media studies and are reflected in this study. Writing about these events and their impact on the future of film and media studies retrospectively in 2006, Nowell-Smith concluded that:

"All this, of course, was fiercely contested and the 1970s continued to be a turbulent time in the BFI – as indeed it was in the surrounding culture. However, the turbulence was highly productive and the battles of 1970 proved to have been well worth fighting." (Nowell-Smith, 2006, p.459)

MacShane's *Using the Media* (1979) provides an interesting early insight into the role of practical work in media education and points the way to what would currently be regarded as media arts courses. Whilst aimed at community and political activists with advice on how to deal with the media it included a section on joint activities involving schools and the professional media and showed how critical media studies might be enhanced by the addition of production work.

Screen published articles that applied a very wide range of theoretical ideas (for example; semiotics, structuralism and post-structuralism, psychoanalysis and a Marxist approach to ideology). This eclectic mix of ideas came to form the accepted theoretical underpinning of the undergraduate and postgraduate courses that emerged during the 1970s and 1980s. The Open University introduced its first media unit, Mass Communications and Society, in 1977. Oliver Boyd-Barrett (1997) has identified other significant early higher education courses in media at Leicester, Westminster, and Glasgow. The BA(Hons)

Contemporary Media Practice at the University of Westminster is notable as an enduring course that has produced many graduates that have gone on to practice as media educators.

Boyd-Barrett (1997) has analysed Buckingham's chronology of developments during the 1970s and argues that *Screen Education* was not as central to the development of the subject as might appear. His view is that as the journals became dominated by the 'high theory' of Althusser, Lacan (structuralists), Barthes, Eco (semioticians), Hall and neo-Marxist structuralism primarily derived from the Frankfurt School, they consequently became less accessible to practising media educators. For Boyd-Barratt, the development of media education during this period was stimulated through work published in a number of journals of which *Screen Education* was just one of many. In particular he notes the— perhaps unsurprising, given the title— emphasis on media texts and the exclusion of more sociological approaches to the media and audiences.

However, by the late 1980s the British Film Institute was able to produce a broad ranging but consensual definition of media education:

"Media education seeks to increase children's critical understanding of the media - namely, television, film, radio, photography, popular music, printed materials and computer software. How media texts work, how they provide meanings, how media institutions and industries are organized, and how audiences make sense of media products, technologies and institutions - these are the issues that media education addresses. It aims to develop systematically children's critical and creative powers through analysis and production of media artefacts. This also deepens their understanding of the pleasure and entertainment provided by the media. Media education aims to create more active and critical media users who will demand, and could contribute to, a greater range and diversity of media products." (Bazalgette, 1989).

Although the definition is couched in terms of education for children it can and has been equally well applied to higher education and contains all the elements that, in varying proportions, underpin a conventional undergraduate media curriculum.

Buckingham (1998) has identified this general approach to media education in the 1990s as one of "demystification" and contrasts this with the "discrimination" of Leavis and Thompson and pre-1960s media education. Discrimination is used to label the process whereby students are taught to value high culture over popular culture. Demystification is used to describe the process where students are equipped with analytical tools that will allow them to *"expose the 'hidden' ideologies of media texts, and thereby 'liberate' themselves from their influence"* (Buckingham, 1998, p.35). When this process is considered within its wider social, political and cultural context Buckingham sees it as part of "democratisation" so that students' cultural backgrounds are recognised and valued as part of a more general student-centred approach to education. The curriculum appears validated and more relevant if it begins with cultural references that are familiar to students.

Buckingham then goes on to argue that this leads to "defensiveness", a process of inoculating students against what are presumed to be the negative effects of the media by equipping them with the tools to identify malevolent media influences. Built into this concept are the assumptions that the media are very powerful and that students are susceptible to its influence. It also has a striking resemblance to the original approach of Leavis and Thompson. Teaching students to privilege

high culture over popular culture is just replaced with teaching students to privilege 'good' media over 'bad'— still a value-driven process.

With much of the theoretical underpinning of media studies derived from neo-Marxist ideology, political economy and the politics of race (for example, Pines and Hall (in Houston *et al.*, 1996)) and gender (for example, Gauntlett (2008)), the subject can be seen as dominated by the left, particularly in the UK. The application of free-market economics to the media has been part of business studies rather than media studies. The media effects debate is seen as a series of moral panics (Cricher, 2008). So whilst the development of the subject appears to follow a progressive narrative, the role of media education and the relationship between teachers, students and pedagogy remains complex and open to challenge (Ruddock, 2013). Media educators sometimes argue that they are teaching students to think for themselves (for example, Gibbons, 2012). However it is possible that they are still teaching students to think like they do.

When the intellectual development of media education is considered alongside the political and economic drivers of public policy for higher education that have accompanied it, the potential for a clash of cultures can be seen. The value of practical skills training as an element of media education has long been recognised. Tana Wollen (quoted in Alvarado *et al.*, 1987, pp.34-35) argues that:

"The dual educational potential of Media Studies is challenging and exciting. It throws into critical relief the distinction between the theoretical and the practical, the academic and the technical, because it requires both deliberative thought and technical dexterity."

It is this careful balance that sits at the heart of what can be called "media arts" courses. These courses are characterised by the production of media artefacts as a pedagogic device to reinforce and challenge students' learning of theoretical concepts. In turn, these concepts are used to inform pre-production, production and post-production decisions. If the balance of theory and practice in a course is seen as a continuum, then it is reasonable to locate media arts courses around the centre with media and communications courses (led by theoretical ideas around the reception and consumption of media artefacts) at one end and art and design courses (led by practice and form and with, in the case of fine art, less regard for the audience) at the other end.

This balance of theory and practice and the desirability and practicality of integrating them has been a preoccupying concern of media education through the 1990s and into the 2000s. Christine Geraghty (2002, p.29) reflects on aspects of theory and practice and challenges what she refers to as the "common sense" assumption in media arts that the integration of theory and practice is both desirable and possible. Geraghty identifies a number of institutional factors that militate against integration. These range from the physical— learning spaces are normally constructed to facilitate theoretical or practice work but not both, to academic career paths. There is a perception that there is an emphasis on conventional publications over practice-based research outputs in the UK's Research Assessment Exercise (RAE)/Research Excellence Framework (REF) (HEFCE, 2014). As the RAE/REF is related to funding, institutional research strategies can be led by this perception and so Geraghty sees this as following

through into the relative status of 'theory' and 'practice' staff in the institution and the consequent promotion opportunities.

Beyond the practicality of integration, Geraghty (2002, p.30) goes on to argue that:

"But for teachers and students alike, I would suggest, the pursuit of integration can mean that the distinctive resonance of different practices (theoretical and practice modes) can be denied or distorted."

Ultimately, if integration occurs at all and if it is to have any value then it must be at the level of the individual student. It is a characteristic of the learning not a characteristic of the course structure. This focus on the student sits well with the preoccupation with 'self' that underlies much art and design practice and pedagogy. Geraghty does not see this as a rationale for a *laissez-faire* curriculum though. Rather, she argues for an explicit foundation in and celebration of both theory and practice together with open-ended opportunities for students to explore the relationships between the two in their own way. Geraghty (ibid.) summarises her argument by reference to student perceptions of the situation:

"Media studies students are massified, described and debated but rarely get to speak for themselves. I remember a student at a Goldsmiths' event who, after a long series of speeches, took issue with those, including Richard Hoggart, who had been criticizing certain aspects of the teaching of media studies. She and her fellow students, she argued, knew what the media industries were like and wanted teaching which was creative, challenging and rigorous because that would help rather than hinder their intellectual as well as their career ambitions."

For current research work on the development of media studies there are a number of important sources. The *Media Education Research Journal* is a relatively new journal, first published in 2010, that provides contemporary coverage of

many of the concerns of this study, particularly from the viewpoint of media education as social practice. Berger and McDougall's (2014) editorial for Volume 4, Issue 1 "*Dial M for Media Education*" provides an overview of the current state of media education with attention to recent developments such as the implications of the Leveson Inquiry on media education, the fallout from the Wikileaks affair¹ and the demise of the 14-19 Creative and Media Diploma² as a result of cuts by the coalition government. It is interesting to note that this contemporary account of media education still draws on the 1985 work of Len Masterman as underpinning, reflecting an on-going coherent narrative through the development of media education despite the apparently disparate nature of the subject itself.

The most comprehensive recent 'state of the subject' work is a result of the *Manifesto for Media Education* website produced by Peter Fraser and Jonathan Wardle (2011):

"This project is an attempt to develop a shared understanding, some shared reasons, for media education. We hope it will stimulate discussion within course teams and with students. We imagine it will lead to conversations about how we teach and what specific things we teach, but those are secondary questions. We believe we may uncover many reasons but it seems better to have articulated many as opposed to none and as Postman says 'A definition is the starting point of a dispute, not the settlement'."

¹ In October 2010, the Wikileaks website disclosed a large number of confidential US army documents relating to the 2004-09 Iraq War to a number of media organisations, leading to an upward revision of the estimate of the number of civilian deaths in the conflict.

² Announced by the Blair government in 2005, the 14-19 diplomas were intended to bridge education and vocational training as a prestigious alternative to the conventional GCSE/AS/A2 route. The Creative and Media Diploma was the most popular of these but support from the New Labour government waned and they were discontinued by the incoming Coalition government in 2010.

The website invited submission from all interested parties and was highly successful, attracting a wide range of contributors from all sectors of media education and many different countries. This resulted in a one-day symposium in London in June 2011 where a series of speakers expanded on their contributions to the manifesto, addressing the themes of Politics, Power and Meaning; Creativity; Literacy and Production, Practice and Professionalism. This study addresses a number of these themes through the prompts to participants so it is possible to compare their responses with the positions taken by contributors to the manifesto.

As an outcome of the symposium, Fraser and Wardle edited a collection of contributions which was published as *Current Perspectives in Media Education: Beyond the Manifesto* in 2013. In their introduction Fraser and Wardle summarise their view of the contributions:

“Implicit in many of the contributions is a desire to identify a metanarrative which legitimizes the work being done in media classrooms. The political context in which media education takes place leads authors to ask whether there should be more emphasis upon questioning the power of the media and whether preparing a workforce for the creative industries risks depoliticizing media education... ..And how much longer will there be a place for media education in the curriculum, particularly in the UK, where a backdrop of marketisation, privatisation and ‘reform’ looms over the experiences of several of our contributors, leading them to feature for the future” (Fraser and Wardle, 2013, p.4)

Many of these concerns feature in this study and are addressed through the responses of the participants, providing some insight into how these issues are perceived by academic practitioners and others.

Further indication of the currency of the issues considered here is provided by the commissioning of a survey-based research project by the main subject association, the Media, Communications and Cultural Studies Association (MeCCSA) in July 2014. In an email asking media academic staff to participate in the survey (MeCCSA, 2014) the Chair, Vice-Chair and Secretary of the association gave a rationale for the project:

“Recent changes to HE policy have impacted upon university priorities and are putting increasing demands on our fields. This research project seeks to track these changes and their consequences as you have experienced them. We need your help and insights as the HESA and UCAS data sets do not adequately categorise our subject areas and field. The responses and data you are able to provide will be of great value, allowing the Association to more effectively understand the nature of the challenges we all currently face, as well as providing a basis for representing our interests in relevant HE policy debates in the future.” (ibid.)

The results of the MeCCSA survey are due to be presented at the next annual conference of the association at the University of Northumbria in January 2015. This timing will enable a useful comparison between the national survey-based findings of the MeCCSA project with the outcomes of this more qualitative project, providing opportunities for further work in the area.

2-4 The Emergence of Critical University Studies

Whilst this study focuses specifically on media studies, the overall context, approaches and concerns relate to a body of research literature that, over the time period taken to complete this study, has come to be identified as *Critical University Studies* (Williams, 2012a). There has long been published literature concerning the nature of higher education that provides a critical commentary

alongside changing policy and practice contexts. Cardinal John Henry Newman is seen as the most notable early exponent (Newman, in-print edition: 1996) with the often cited collection of discourses first published in 1899 as *The Idea of a University* where he begins with a definition of a university that emphasises the role of teaching and learning above research and distinguishes the role of a university from the role of the church (“*intellectual, not moral*”), a concern of the time:

“That it is a place of *teaching universal knowledge*. This implies that its object is, on the one hand, intellectual, not moral; and, on the other, that it is the diffusion and extension of knowledge rather than the advancement. If its object were scientific and philosophical discovery, I do not see why a University should have students...” (Newman, *ibid.*)

Newman’s work was influential as a rationale for higher education over the first half of the twentieth century although the development of the sociology of higher education only emerged slowly as distinctive from the greater body of work around the sociology of primary and secondary education in schools.

(Clark, 1973, p.4). Clark cites Durkheim’s (1922) definition of education as:

“a collection of practices and institutions that have been organized slowly in the course of time, which are comparable with all the other social institutions and which express them, and which, therefore, can no more be changed at will than the structure of the society itself”

This grounds education in social practices enacted through institutions that are a rather fatalistic reflection of society but fails to acknowledge the possibility of societal change through education.

Krystian Szadkowski (2013) reviews Clark’s account of the development of the literature over this period and highlights the influence of Max Weber’s (1948) work on the “*the rise of bureaucratic management and specialization in the sciences*”

(Szadkowski, 2013, p.204) and Thorstein Veblen's (1918) work on "*the impact of business logic on university administration and forms of control in the higher education sector*" (Szadkowski, 2013, p.204) as the origins of what is now being termed *Critical University Studies*, from an American perspective.

From these origins, the post-second world war history of American higher education research developed primarily as studies of inequality in higher education and a more psychological thread that focused on students and the effects of higher education experiences (Szadkowski, 2013). As higher education studies continued through the 1960s to the 1980s in both America and Europe, the economics of higher education emerged as a concern as it was a time of expansion, diversification and more student-centred approaches to learning and teaching that Teichler (1996) argues were a response to the student protests of the late 1960s.

The concerns of higher education studies, with a focus on Europe, since the 1980s are documented by Guy Neave (2012) as a response to increasing state control, pseudo-free market competition, globalisation and the discourse of a 'knowledge-based economy'. Neave's approach is comparative, considering the differential impact of these factors on higher education in a number of European countries, notably France and Portugal. This comparative element of higher education studies was developed by Leo Goedegebuure and Frans van Vught (1996) but they are skeptical regarding the depth of comparative studies at that time, seeing much of the work as overly descriptive. They also counsel against setting the development of 'a theory of higher education' as a goal of higher education studies. They perceive higher education as a disparate phenomenon

that is better understood through the application of “existing disciplines, like history, sociology, economics etc.” (ibid. p.390) and the research methods associated with them.

Building on this past literature, a number of researchers have found Jeffery J. Williams (2012a) proposal of *Critical University Studies* as a more appropriate way of labeling contemporary higher education research. Williams describes this body of work:

“This new wave in higher education looks beyond the confines of particular specializations and takes a resolutely critical perspective. Part of its task is scholarly, reporting on and analyzing changes besetting higher education, but it goes a step further and takes a stand against some of those changes, notably those contributing to the “unmaking of the public university,” in the words of the literary critic Christopher Newfield.” (ibid.)

“To give it a name recognizes that it has attained significant mass and signals a gathering place for those considering similar work. “Critical” indicates the new work’s oppositional stance, similar to approaches like critical legal studies, critical race studies, critical development studies, critical food studies, and so on, that focuses on the ways in which current practices serve power or wealth and contribute to injustice or inequality rather than social hope. “Studies” picks up its cross-disciplinary character, focused on a particular issue and drawing on research from any relevant area to approach the problem. “University” outlines its field of reference, which includes the discourse of “the idea of the university” as well as the actual practices and diverse institutions of contemporary higher education.” (ibid.)

This rationale for *Critical University Studies* is significant in the way in which it uses the term ‘critical’. Williams indicates a conventional use of the term to denote a concern with the relationship between practices and power but the first part of this definition appears to pre-judge the issue with an assumption that current changes within higher education are universally negative and it is the role of critical university studies to actively campaign against such changes.

An understanding of the power relationships underpinning the social practices of higher education provides important insights and, as has usually been the case historically, few within the academy have argued in favour of changes imposed from outside. However, these power relationships are complex and multi-dimensional as demonstrated by some of the participant responses in this study. Academics can enact practices that can mitigate and resist change that is perceived as imposed from outside. The two assumptions of Williams' description of critical university studies; change is universally negative and power is only exercised in one direction appear open to question and that relates to one of the themes of this study.

Williams' new terminology has gained traction quickly (Szadkowski, 2013), particularly in the USA, but Bob Hanke and Alison Hearne have highlighted an unavoidable but significant challenge to researchers in *Critical University Studies*:

"How is it possible to enact a meaningful critique of the university system while continuing to function within, and reap the benefits of, that same system?" (Hanke and Hearne, 2012, p.19)

If it is assumed that academic researchers working through higher education institutions enact the practices that constitute *Critical University Studies*, then it is inevitable that it will be self-referential. Commentators outside higher education might point to this as an explanation for Williams' pre-judgment of higher education reforms but that is likely to be an over-simplification. Although this is a notably extreme example, a number of legitimate social science research traditions make no claim to objective research and the subjective influences of researcher and research environment are routinely considered in research

methodology. Research practices are capable of foregrounding this issue and can still produce valid and useful findings.

This self-referential aspect of *Critical University Studies* inevitably leads to greater complexity in reviewing the literature and distinguishing primary and secondary data. Conventionally, research projects review the existing literature as secondary research material, generate primary data in some way and then analyse it in relation to the existing literature. A study of academic practices, particularly when using a discourse analysis approach, blurs this distinction as the literature is both secondary research material and primary discourse data.

Within this study, the participant response data is clearly primary data, unique to this study. The research literature is used both as contextual underpinning for the study and, in some cases, as primary discourse data for comparative purposes, in relation to the primary interview data.

Although Williams' characterisation of *Critical University Studies* is provocative, the development of a coherent, recognisable and useful approach to the study of higher education is a laudable aim and so this study sets out to make a contribution to that aim, with the recognition that this work is centred on a researcher who is embedded in the practices under consideration.

Chapter Three

Conceptual Framework

“...the university, despite the nostalgic image of an elitist, inviolate ivory tower, has become a central location in contemporary societies for testing out the relations between the public, the market, and the state, and as such a kind of laboratory of the social.” (Whelan et al, 2013, p.4)

This chapter considers ways of conceptualising higher education practices and grounds the study within a philosophical and theoretical framework. This is then developed in the next chapter into a rationale for the collection of research data and its subsequent analysis. The outcome is that the work is grounded in a position that regards the practices around media studies as socially constructed through discourses that can be characterised and analysed using an approach that was promoted by Foucault (2002a and 2002b) and others (for example, Saarinen, 2008). This position uses a consideration of discourse, knowledge and power to define and account for the practices that constitute media studies and subsequently leads to a methodological approach that underpins the use of semi-structured interviews as an appropriate data collection process within a study that is necessarily a self-referential examination of professional practice; a use of academic practices to study academic practices.

3-1 Media Studies: Social Construction and Social Practice

In common with much of the work in higher education studies, this study adopts a social constructionism approach to conceptualising '*media studies*' and the activities associated with it. The study is based on the assertion that the reality of media studies is socially constructed. Ian Hacking (2000) traces the origins of this approach to Berger and Luckmann's (1966) book, *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge* although the widespread application of this approach is, according to Hacking, more associated with the 1980s and 1990s. Also tracking the development of social constructionism, Dave Elder-Vass (2012, p.5) summarises the position:

"Social constructionisms derive their force from a further claim: that changing the ways in which people collectively think and/or communicate about the world *in itself* constitutes a change with significance for the social world."

It is this "*in itself*" connection between collective thought/communication and the reality of the social world that characterises this approach and gives it its distinctiveness.

Building on the social construction of reality, higher education can be considered as a collection of '*social practices*'. This term is theorised by (Reckwitz, 2002) and used here as defined by Tuomela (2007, p.5):

"A social practice in its core sense is taken to consist of recurrent collective social actions performed for a shared social reason, expressed in the collective attitude ...underlying the social practice."

This characterisation of '*social practice*' can be applied to this study by regarding media studies in higher education as a cluster of these practices, particularly in the actions of academic staff who consider themselves part of the performance

of media studies “*collective social actions*” for “*shared social reasons*” that are expressed in the “*collective attitude*” that this study seeks to evidence.

This approach is consistent with the definition and example given by Norman Fairclough (2003, pp.23-24) where he argues that:

“Social practices can be thought of as ways of controlling the selection of certain structural possibilities and the exclusion of others, and the retention of these selections over time, in particular areas of social life.”

Fairclough then goes on to cite the changing ways in which teaching and research practices relate to the practices of higher education management as a result of what he sees as a process of ‘*marketisation*’ as an example. (ibid.)

In the introduction to their polemic, *Zombies in the Academy* (Whelan et al., 2013, p.4) the authors identify universities as “...a kind of laboratory of the social”, drawing on the work of Eli Thorkelson to draw out the richness and complexity of academic practice and to elevate it beyond a potentially deterministic view of the relationships between universities, “*the public, the market, and the state*” (ibid.)

Thorkelson colourfully characterises it as follows:

“Sometimes I also think it's too easy to reduce universities to rather stale bureaucratic conceptions, to a boring metanarrative about the state and capital, for instance. So part of the project has to be to confront the gothic element of academic life, its moments of dejection and rejection and abjection, its fantastic, romantic qualities, its dynamics of lunacy and wasted effort, its moments of ignorance and forgetting. The academic world has structures of chaos as well as structures of order; it enchants as much as it disenchants; it's not only about the play of socioeconomic structure, but about the dramatic, poetic, affective play of everyday life.” (Thorkelson, 2012)

It is this richness that this consideration of media studies seeks to engage with; social practices that constitute “*structures of chaos*” and “*structures of order*”.

Mason (1996, p.27) foregrounds the requirement for studies such as this to adopt a clear and consistent ontological approach; “*are they based on similar, complementary or comparable assumptions about the nature of social entities and phenomena?*” Mason illustrates this point by emphasising the distinction between “*an ontological position which sees social life as a collection of social discourses*” and a “*position which sees individual personalities as empirical realities, and social life as a collection of these...*”

When confronting this dichotomy, the nature of higher education practice and its embodiment in the institutional context of a university would appear to be more naturally regarded as a collection of social discourses rather than an amalgam of individuals embodying an empirical reality. This is consistent with the view of Whelan *et al.* (2013, p.4) that universities are “*...a kind of laboratory of the social*” and is similar to the position adopted by Mayson and Schapper in their use of interviews to study research-led teaching;

“We argue that the ways in which senior academics speak about research and teaching are not simply descriptions of the ‘reality’ of academic work. The language used to communicate this reality is practical in that it defines and structures organisational understandings and practices in order to legitimise dominant institutional views about organisational policies and structures.” (Mayson & Schapper, 2010, p.471)

This approach to higher education practice as a social construct seems to sit well with the prevalence of practices within universities such as student feedback, peer-review, collegiality and collective responsibility for academic judgments. Whilst there is a ‘celebrity academic’ or ‘star researcher’ phenomenon within the wider public sphere, within universities the dominant practices are regarded as collective and tend to be more highly valued by the academy than highly

individualistic activities. Courses are designed by groups of academic staff, approved by a panel of internal and external academic staff and student representatives, and assessment judgments are made through a process of grading by two or more academic staff. Ultimately, degrees are awarded by an examination board making a recommendation to an academic board or a senate. There has been an identifiable shift towards a more managerial approach, the “*highly managerial corporate enterprises in which scholars are rather lowly employees*” identified by Collini (2012, p.22-23) but this always has to be seen to relate to a deliberative function normally constituted as the inevitable committee and is, perhaps nominally, subservient to it. In their exploration of the changing role of academic middle managers, Hellawell and Hancock (2001) draw on Bush’s (1995) school-based definition of collegiality and argue that it can be applied within a higher education context. This definition states that collegiality:

“assume(s) that organisations determine policy and make decisions through a process of discussion leading to consensus. Power is shared among some or all members of the organisation who are thought to have a mutual understanding about the objectives of the institution.” (Bush, 1995, p.52)

This definition is significant as it captures a number of assumptions about the way higher education operates institutionally; consensus, power-sharing and a shared view of the institution’s objectives, for example. Hellawell and Hancock go on to explore the relationship between the value institutions place on collegiality and the perceptions of some of the academic staff using a similar embedded semi-structured interview methodology to that deployed in this study. Their study focuses on academic middle managers in a single ‘new’ UK university whilst this study looks at the specifics of media studies across a range of UK universities.

3-2 Media Studies: Discourses

The term ‘discourse’ is widely used across a broad range of theoretical and methodological approaches and within a number of subject disciplines and with a number of overlapping meanings. Much of Foucault’s work on discourse served to expand the term beyond its more traditional use in structural linguistics where it has been used to generalise the term ‘conversation’ and expand it to a broader set of contexts and modes. Fairclough sums up his approach to Foucauldian discourse seeing:

“Discourses as ways of representing aspects of the world – the processes, relations and structures of the material world, the ‘mental world’, of thoughts, feelings, beliefs and so forth, and the social world. Particular aspects of the world may be represented differently, so we are generally in the position of having to consider the relationship between different discourses.” (Fairclough, 2003, p.124)

McHoul and Grace (2002) situate Foucault’s work in relation to two major intellectual traditions of the time, structuralism and hermeneutics (as a branch of phenomenology). They argue that Foucault did not accept the existence of a real and deep structure to ideas and texts and he also rejected a phenomenological approach of considering all reality to be constructed from human consciousness.

Foucault’s initial approach to this area is well illustrated by the often-quoted introduction to *The Order of Things* (Foucault, 2002c). His point is not about the nature of thought within the culture represented by the encyclopaedia but to point out the impact of our own systems of thought on us, rendering the quoted taxonomy largely incomprehensible within our ways of thinking. When immersed in a particular epistemological and ontological framework, that framework can

effectively disappear and the prevalent ways of thinking and communicating can seem to be the only ways of thinking and communicating.

“This book arose out of a passage in Borges...This passage quotes a ‘certain Chinese encyclopaedia’ in which it is written that ‘animals are divided into: (a) belonging to the Emperor, (b) embalmed, (c) tame, (d) sucking pigs, (e) sirens, (f) fabulous, (g) stray dogs, (h) included in the present classification, (i) frenzied, (j) innumerable, (k) drawn with a very fine camelhair brush, (l) *et cetera*, (m) having just broke the water pitcher, (n) that from a long way off look like flies’. In the wonderment of this taxonomy, the thing we apprehend in one great leap, the thing that, by means of the fable, is demonstrated as the exotic charm of another system of thought, is the limitation of our own, the stark impossibility of thinking *that*.” (ibid, p.xvi)

In this study, this concept is used to consider the practices around media studies as captured through the discourses that evidence ways of thinking. In particular, the evidence presented here is related to a specific time period in the development of the subject and UK higher education in general, spanning a period of significant externally-initiated change where practical matters of funding are seen by some as having an ideological significance. McHoul and Grace recognise a temporal element to Foucault’s approach and this needs to be followed through in the analysis of the data.

“His investigations are conceptual, and the main concepts he approaches in his work – discourse, power and the subject (among others) – seem to us to be geared towards what he called an ‘ontology of the present’. That is, Foucault is asking a very basic philosophical question: who are we? Or perhaps: who are we *today*?” (McHoul, Grace, 2005, p. viii)

For this study, Trowler’s (2001, p.186) account of discourse as a way of understanding higher education is taken as applicable here. Trowler takes a middle course between a narrow definition focused purely on discourse as “*a stretch of spoken or written language or language in use*” and a much broader use where discourse is almost synonymous with ‘*ideology*’ or ‘*culture*’. Trowler’s

position between these approaches is to regard discourse as denoting language “as social practice” but also “conditioned by social structures”. Here, Trowler is using structure in a way suggested by Giddens (1984); “properties lending coherence and relative permanence to social practices in different times and locales” (Trowler, 2001, p.186).

Foucault, reflecting on his own work on discourse, recognised that he used the term in a number of ways and that he needed to situate it:

“I believe I have in fact added to its meanings: treating it sometimes as the general domain of all statements, sometimes as an individualizable group of statements, and sometimes as a regulated practice that accounts for a number of statements.” (Foucault, 2002b, p.90)

It is this final usage that most closely relates to the approach adopted here. The statements made within the semi-structured interviews by both the participants and the interviewer are viewed as accounted for by an underlying set of regulating practices that constitute media studies in the academy.

3-3 Media Studies: Power

A distinguishing feature of Foucault’s work on discourse is his concern with power relationships. Drawing on Foucault’s (1978) work on criminal justice systems, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, McHoul and Grace (2005) distinguish his conceptualisation of ‘power’ from a view that it is a socio-political effect that is ‘owned’ by the ‘powerful’ and wielded over the ‘powerless’. They point to Foucauldian power as a balance of power relations that are reflected and enacted through discourses. This view is taken up by Randell-Moon:

“For Foucault, power is never simply an oppressive force, but rather a system of self-directed control and discipline whose very effectiveness lies in its ability to

encourage individual subjects to reproduce technologies of control and rule...
...This self-directed control eliminates the need for external physical or institutional coercion, since subjects carry out this coercion on themselves. For this reason, Foucault does not treat power as a repressive or oppressive force but as constitutive and productive” (Randell-Moon *et al.*, 2013, p.63)

This subtle notion is a more useful characterisation of power than that portrayed in the critique of increasing *managerialism* in higher education institutions that characterises much of what is becoming termed *Critical University Studies*. Whilst power, in the sense of who might possess and wield it, might appear to reside in association with hierarchical job titles that include terms such as *director*, *manager*, *head* and *chief executive*, and be an attribute or resource that people possess to varying degrees, the specific nature of academic practices complicates this considerably and it is more appropriate to use Foucault’s approach as expressed by Kendall, Wickham and Hunt:

“Power relations serve to make the connections, ..., between the visible and the sayable...” (Kendall and Wickham, 2003, p. 48)

“...power is the process of ‘keeping things going’, it is not a ‘thing’, in the way fuel or electricity is.” (Hunt and Wickham, 1994, pp. 80-1)

In this thesis participant responses demonstrate the ways in which people ‘keep things going’.

Chapter Four

Research Methodology

4-1 Methodological Framework

Education, as an area of applied research, draws on a range of disciplines and research methods, each underpinned by an epistemological standpoint regarding the nature of knowledge about education and an ontological positioning of education research as a part of the social sciences. This taxonomy of approaches to research is dealt with in detail by Cohen et al. (2001). They draw extensively on the work of Burrell and Morgan (1979) to derive relationships between a philosophical standpoint in regard to ontology, epistemology, determinism and a methodological approach. Whilst recognising the limitations of this taxonomy (Deetz, 1996; McCourt, 1997), this research study can be usefully located within this framework.

Subjective Approach		Objective Approach
Nominalism	← Ontology →	Realism
Anti-Positivism	← Epistemology →	Positivism
Voluntarism	← Human Nature → (Free Will)	Determinism
Ideographic	← Methodology →	Nomothetic
The Nature of Social Science (Derived from Burrell and Morgan (1979, p3) and Cohen et al (2001, p7))		

The approach here will be distinctly subjective. The ontology of this project will draw on the account of nominalism provided by Burrell and Morgan (ibid., p4):

“The nominalist position revolves around the assumption that the social world external to individual cognition is made up of nothing more than names, concepts and labels which are used to structure reality. The nominalist does not admit to there being any ‘real’ structure to the world which these concepts are used to describe.”

This is distinctive from a realist approach that regards the social world as objective, independent and empirical with an existence prior to and separate from individual cognition. When designing a research study that looks at the ways a particular subject area, such as media studies, exists within diverse individual institutions of higher education and across the English higher education

sector it is difficult to conceive of a clear objective identity for something that only seems to exist at all by virtue of the social interactions between individuals (students, academic staff, parents, advisors), groups of individuals (departments, faculties, institutions, research communities) and the wider public sphere of policy makers, the general public and the media. The study of the media is itself the study of the mass communication of ideas; an essentially social phenomenon, albeit one that has a tangible technological presence in media artefacts; films, newspapers, radio and television programmes etc. This meta-study of the media fits well with a nominalist view of the social world.

Whilst a nominalist approach positions the study in relation to the nature of reality this requires a complementary position regarding the nature of what we can know about media studies phenomena and how it is possible to communicate that knowledge – an epistemological stance. Burrell and Morgan (1979, p5) characterise the epistemology of social science as a positivism axis, defining a positivist approach as seeking *“to explain and predict what happens in the social world by searching for regularities and causal relationships between its constituent elements”*. This is contrasted with an anti-positivist approach where *“the social world is essentially relativistic and can only be understood from the point of view of the individuals who are directly involved in the activities which are to be studied”*.

A key consideration for this study is the role of an observer in defining what constitutes knowledge within a research paradigm. This research study must deal with the inescapable relationship between the researcher and the research material. With a background as a media studies academic and a current

professional practitioner in the area, in this case the researcher cannot be regarded as an objective observer as envisaged at the positivist end of Burrell and Morgan's epistemological axis. This study is much more suited to an anti-positivist approach with its emphasis on relative knowledge that is specific to individuals. Adopting this stance takes what might be considered a problem – the absence of an independent observer of media studies – and turns it into an advantage; *"One has to understand from the inside rather than the outside"* (ibid., p5). This study is based on what it is possible for an embedded professional practitioner to know about media studies.

Although necessarily taking a subjective view of both the documentary evidence of public discourses and the research interview data, the embedded researcher's initial perceptions of these can provide a valuable starting point for the exploration of the area. Although academic practitioners are normally based within a single, specific institution, academic practice implies a broader set of professional interactions through conferences, subject networks and external examiner processes. This enables the researcher to design a study that is relevant and addresses topical, potentially contentious, issues without adopting a *tabula rasa* and so can identify areas of interest such as *'employability'* and *'theory/practice'* from a preliminary pilot study. An embedded researcher can draw on their own professional practice to identify issues and then test them against the current literature before commencing the main study. From that point it is then necessary to maintain a degree of reflexivity and meta-reflexivity through the study. Ultimately, it is possible to compare the study findings and their derivation from the evidence in the light of the initial assumptions that

underpinned the study design and reflect on the influence of researcher subjectivity.

The third Burrell and Morgan axis is an articulation of what it means to be human in a sociological context. This is the philosophy of free will and is set between the poles of determinism and voluntarism. At these extremes, people who constitute an organisation such as a university and their associated activities are considered to either be entirely a product of external causes and effects; the individual is an outcome of their environment (determinism) or else the individual is seen as completely autonomous, exercising unrestrained choices (voluntarism). Within the context of a university, both these extremes fail to capture the complex nature of the social interactions that constitute the practices of higher education. The theoretical grounding of this work views the social interactions of the participants as the defining basis of the organisation and higher education as communication within social structures. This leads to a rejection of total voluntarism. Members of a university engage in both formal and informal interactions that are underpinned by power relationships, evidenced within discourse. But in seeking a position on the determinism/voluntarism spectrum, the idea that the action of individuals is entirely determined by the social and cultural practices of the institution also fails to capture the complexity of higher education's practices and the actions of individuals associated with those practices. Indeed, the language of academic practice implies a significant degree of autonomy. '*Academic freedom*' is a frequently used term and can be expressed as a set of codified rights within higher education (University and College Union, 2009). In their statement on academic freedom the University

and College Union set out their expression of principles of this autonomy; *“freedom in teaching and discussion”* and *“freedom from institutional censorship, including the right to express one's opinion publicly about the institution or the education system in which one works”*.

Whilst the University and College Union expresses academic freedom as a set of unqualified rights, higher education institutions may take a more nuanced stance by expressing academic freedom as a set of rights together with associated responsibilities. The University of Bath (1988) in their institutional statement of academic freedom explicitly associates a responsibility to each right. For example, the rights/responsibilities include;

“Freedom: Within the law to question and test received wisdom and to put forward new ideas and controversial or unpopular opinions.

Corresponding responsibility: To support the same freedoms for those of differing view.

Freedom: To select methods of teaching course elements which have been properly agreed.

Corresponding responsibility: To take full cognizance of (i) the intellectual and professional needs of students and (ii) requirement for the integrity and coherence of an academic course.

Freedom: To take an active part in the governance of the University.

Corresponding responsibility: To accept decisions properly arrived at.”

This gives insight into the way an institution perceives the autonomy of its members and how that autonomy integrates with the practices of that institution. There is an emphasis on the individual exercising rights within the constraints of collective practices; *“take an active part”* but *“accept decisions*

properly arrived at". Here, "*properly arrived at*" implies the primacy of some collective decision making processes through committees and other governance mechanisms.

This leads then to an intermediate position between determinism and voluntarism. Members of a university exercise a degree of individual control over their personal professional practice but this has limits and is constrained by institutional culture and social practices.

Having established a philosophical position with respect to ontology, epistemology and free will, the methodological position of the study follows as a consequence. Burrell and Morgan characterise this as a positioning between ideographic methods and nomothetic methods. For Burrell and Morgan, the ideographic approach "*emphasises the analysis of the subjective accounts which one generates by 'getting inside' situations and involving oneself in the everyday flow of life*" (ibid. p6). This is contrasted with nomothetic methods that "*lay emphasis on the importance of basing research upon systematic protocol and technique*" (ibid. p6). Nomothetic methods are generally associated with research in the experimental and natural sciences and can be appropriated for use in the social sciences, where they tend towards the systematic collection of defined data and a more quantitative approach to analysis. In contrast, ideographic methods concentrate on directly capturing the complexity of social practices through a sampling of direct accounts and experiences.

In designing a particular research study there are often a number of legitimate alternative approaches that could be deployed, either singularly or in a mixed-methods combination. Therefore, it is necessary to consider the range of options available for this study and to justify the decisions made. This then leads to a consideration of the legitimacy of the findings and recognition of the limitations of the data. These limitations are important if there is to be an extrapolation from the specific to the general. When formulating a research programme and choosing the most appropriate tools, the basis for these choices needs to be derived from the research questions. Whilst there may be an element of iteration around the research aims and the design of the study, ultimately any research method has to be capable of delivering answers to the questions posed.

On the basis of the above analysis, this study draws on semi-structured interviews to generate primary discourse data and then makes use of publically available secondary data for comparative purposes. This method dovetails with the *naturalistic inquiry* approach, providing greater depth of discourse sampling than a survey/questionnaire could offer.

Although Burrell and Morgan's taxonomy has achieved significant recognition and longevity, it has been subject to a number of critiques over the thirty-five years since the publication of *Sociological Paradigms and Organisational Analysis* (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). In particular, Deetz (1996) attributes some of the success of their model to the power it has to legitimise both mainstream approaches to organisational research and emerging alternatives. However Deetz also points out the paradox that arises when Burrell and Morgan's four-axis model is applied

to itself, particular in relation to the subjective/objective axis. For Deetz, contemporary language-based epistemology problematises the subject/object dichotomy and characterises it as a discursive practice with political implications. So by positioning research along this axis Burrell and Morgan are establishing an implicit hierarchy:

“The subjective-objective distinction performs political functions by constraining the conception of science and creating hierarchies of research programs based on the same faulty logic as the distinction itself.” (Deetz, 1996, p.193)

So although a subjective stance has been adopted for this study, it is recognised that this not unproblematic. However, a recognition of the discursive practices that construct research methods alongside the discursive practices that construct the ‘*media studies*’ domain provides a degree of consistency on which to proceed with the investigation.

4-2 Approach to Discourse Analysis

Widely used across the social sciences, discourse analysis is used to label a very broad range of methodological approaches to the analysis of a variety data. As an all encompassing definition Taylor (2003, p.5) summarises discourse analysis as “the close study of language in use”. Taylor then expands on this to categorise approaches to discourse analysis into four main areas;

- A linguistic approach focussing on formal language structure and the communication of meaning.

- Work that emphasises the situated use of language and the impact this has on communication.
- Discourse analysis that is preoccupied with discourse within a specific and specialised domain and examines the use of specialised vocabulary and discursive practices to define and characterise the domain.
- A focus on much larger societal or cultural contexts for language with a preoccupation with “power and resistance, contest and struggle” with an “assumption... ..that the language available to people enables and constrains not only their expression of certain ideas but also what they do.” (ibid., p.9)

Taylor notes that these categorisations often overlap and it is the final two that characterise the approach adopted here. Although the study is based specifically on media studies, the analysis does consider the relationships between the specialised discourses of media studies and the much broader public discourses around higher education and its role in society.

This position underpins the methodological approach throughout the study. It derives from the initial scoping of media studies, the formulation of the research questions (see Chapter One) and reinforced by the review of existing research literature in Chapter Two. This confirmed that much of the relevant sociological research into the issues around UK higher education adopted a similar approach and continuing this would provide a degree of methodological consistency between this study and the secondary literature, allowing comparisons to be drawn reasonably. For example, Trowler in defining a conceptual and

methodological framework for his analysis of the extent to which academics are 'captured' by the discursive practices of managerialism, quotes Potter and Wetherell (1987) and confirms his position:

"...discursive practices 'do not just describe things, they do things', and the things they do have important implications individually (in terms of identity), socially (in terms of social construction) and politically (in terms of the distribution of power)." (Trowler, 2001, p.186)

Adopting this starting point provided a framework on which to build the research design, data collection and analysis:

Research Design

The priority in the research design is to generate a legitimate and substantial amount of relevant primary data that captures the discursive practices that are relevant to the research questions. The design must be feasible within the resource limits of a single doctoral researcher. Building on the experiences of other researchers undertaking projects of similar style and scope (for example, Jump, 2011), a design consisting of primary semi-structured interviews together with some associated collection and analysis of publically available primary documents was considered a sufficiently reliable and proven approach to research questions of this nature.

Developing the design beyond this initial framework brought together the review of the existing literature, particularly around the history of the development of media studies as an academic subject, and the researcher's own professional experiences. Drawing on the advantages available to the embedded researcher, it was possible to establish a relatively small set of interview prompts for each participant that were likely to provoke the participant into deploying discursive practices that would provide legitimate data worthy of further comparative analysis. For example, a purpose and rationale for media studies is a recurrent debate through the literature and coincides with the researcher's professional practices experiences. When tested in the initial four pilot interviews, this was found to be a fruitful theme for exploration as the participant responses were complex and diverse and provided a useful opportunity for a comparison with public discourses evidenced through other primary sources such as university promotional materials.

Data Collection

Underpinning the interview element of the data collection is the premise that the participants' responses consist of discursive practices that construct the reality of media studies for them. These practices consist of language elements such as vocabulary, phrases and arguments that provide the material for a comparative analysis. Comparisons can be made between the various participant responses and also between participant responses and examples of public discourse assembled through a subsequent data collection exercise. The process of data collection focused on capturing these discursive practices by providing an

opportunity for participants to talk openly, freely and at length and without preparation, in response to minimal prompting. The prompts were based around elements of potentially oppositional discourses identified from the literature, public discourse and professional practice. They were then structured to encourage firstly engagement (“tell me about yourself”) and then building in elements of public discourse with the aim of surfacing complexities and ambiguities (for example, “what does vocational mean to you?” and then “now tell me about employability”).

Data Analysis

The data analysis phase of the project inevitably consisted of an extensive practical and technical process of parsing the data, extracting elements for use in Chapters Five, Six and Seven. This was a complex multi-stage process with the potential to generate a number of valid but distinct interpretations of the participant responses. To produce a rationale for the analysis presented here that goes beyond a superficial ‘themes emerged’ requires a tracking of the process and reference to the underlying concepts and research questions.

Following the interviews, primacy within the project shifted from the issues and themes identified in the literature to the primary interview data to ensure that the analyses remains focused on the participants’ construction of media studies. The analyses were led by the participant responses with subsequent analysis consisting of a comparison with relevant primary public discourse data and associated secondary research. This ensured that the analyses and subsequent

conclusions were driven by the concerns of the participants, arguably a more valid treatment than the reverse process of trawling the data for responses that fit a pre-conceived idea of what the key themes and issues should be.

Practically, this approach was realised through the data coding process which involved multiple passes through the interview transcriptions. A first pass through the responses focused on coding them in relation to the interviewer prompts. This provided an overview of the responses but revealed the discrepancies between the *a priori* themes and the balance of participant transcripts in terms of both the extent of their response and the discursive practices they deployed in building their contribution. For example, the prompting designed to expose a preconceived notion of an oppositional discourse around the mass media coverage of media studies did not provoke a volume of response nor any evidence of discursive practices that might form the basis of a valid analysis and the theme was discarded. Conversely, whilst participant views on the role of assessment was not initially considered likely to form a particularly significant element of the analysis, the first coding pass demonstrated that a number of participants had referred to assessment practices as part of their response and that there were sufficient depth to this to justify an analytical theme. These ‘*emergent*’ themes were codified through a second complete pass through the transcription and used to form the basis of the analysis presented here.

In this way, the themes, as presented in the analysis chapters, were assembled. Asserting the primacy of the interview data as the starting point for the analyses,

these themes then formed the basis for additional secondary research of the associated academic literature and the assembly of related public discourse data to form the basis of the discourse analysis.

Following identification and analysis, the seventeen individual themes presented here were reviewed to establish a preferred structure for the analysis chapters. Whilst it would be possible to cluster the analyses in a variety of ways, the establishment of three meta-themes allowed them to be presented in a logical progression and in clusters of appropriate size for the thesis. On this basis, the analyses are presented in three chapters; discourses of identity, discourses of academic practice and discourses of public policy.

4-3 Relationship Between Discourse Analysis and Critical University Studies

The relationship between the emerging body of work identified as *Critical University Studies (CUS)* and the work presented here is multi-faceted. CUS (Williams, 2012a) has emerged over the period of this study as an umbrella term for a body of academic research literature that seeks to critique recent developments in higher education. It can therefore be considered as a relevant albeit more generalised source of secondary research material with which to contextualise this specific work on media studies. Alternatively, CUS can also be considered as a source of primary public discourse data arising as it does from academic practice. This is of particular interest as, when considered as a set of discursive practices, a strand through CUS can be characterised as a discourse of

'*apocalypse*' with a portrayal of higher education on the brink of catastrophe. In contrast to this study, much of CUS consists of analyses and reviews of higher education policy and the associated public discourses with less emphasis, so far, on primary fieldwork within higher education institutions. Whilst methodologically more complex with a blurring of the distinction between primary and secondary research, a comparison between the discursive practices of CUS and the discursive practices of media studies, as evidenced here, is of value as it demonstrates the ways academics deploy and manage oppositional discourses. A publicly deployed discourse of '*apocalypse*' contrasts with the more nuanced approach to the changing higher education environment evidenced through the discursive practices of the participants in this study.

4-4 Selection of Public Discourse Data

The format of the analyses in Chapters Five, Six and Seven consists of a presentation of the discursive elements extracted from the participant responses and then a comparison of these elements with each other and also with examples of the relevant public discourses. These comparisons are also contextualised through reference to appropriate research literature.

With copious amounts of higher education public discourse data readily available, it was necessary to sample this carefully to provide a manageable but valid body of data to associate with the participant responses. The principle behind this analysis was to maintain the primacy of the participant responses and to search for additional related public discourse data and research literature to affect the

analysis. For example, in Section 6-3 the analysis of the discourses around quality assurance consisted of an initial identification through the coding process of significant participant discursive practices as they managed their interactions with the quality assurance processes within their institution – the use of terms such as ‘aliens’, ‘ghosts’ and ‘roundheads’ by participants signalled that this was likely to be a area for fruitful analysis. Following the establishment of these elements as the focus, further research led to the identification of the policy documentation of the Quality Assurance Agency as an important source of relevant public discourse data, with a vocabulary quite different from that used by participants, that could contextualise the participant responses and demonstrate how these discourses are contested, managed and ultimately accommodated. An associated literature search followed and this led to a consideration Morley’s (2003) work in the same area and this was integrated into the analysis to ground it within the existing body of academic work.

This focus on the participant responses as the primary driver of the analysis allowed a coherent picture of the participants’ construction of media studies to emerge from the data with sufficient public discourse and research literature to contextualise it and evidence the relationships between public discourses of higher education and the discourses of media studies deployed by the participants.

4-5 Selection of Participants

Taylor (2003) notes the difficulties in producing discourse data, as the process is very labour-intensive and not particularly efficient. This is likely to lead to smaller sample sizes than are achievable with other approaches but there remains an obligation on the researcher to ensure that the data are a valid sample of the overall domain under consideration, in this case, undergraduate media studies in England.

The interviewees were approached individually, either face-to-face or by email, and invited to participate in the project. The overall aim was to ensure that the totality of the interviews would effectively sample the discourses around media studies. A diverse participant group would provide more opportunities to identify a wider range of discourses. The selection process was based on a number of criteria:

1. Would the interview be compliant with the project's ethical approval?

This precluded the selection of staff with a line-management connection and students with an assessment connection to the researcher.

2. Will the potential participant be likely to offer a pertinent sample of the media studies discourse? Invitations were targeted at people working across the range of media studies approaches; for example, theory and practice, journalism to creative film making practice.

3. Will the participant's background contribute a breadth of experience to the project? Participants were identified as having significant influence on, and/or a major stake in, the outcomes of media studies courses and are

indicative of the groups of people involved; academic and professional service staff, graduates and student advisors.

Although gender and ethnic diversity issues are likely to be as prevalent in media studies as they are in other areas of the academy they are not the focus of this study. Detailed demographic data was not collected and the participants were not asked to formally self-identify with particular characteristics such as gender and ethnic/cultural background although some did refer to their gender/ethnic backgrounds when asked to describe how they came to be in the professional positions they are now. However, it was important to check that selecting on the basis of professional background/role was not inadvertently also delivering a group of participants that was markedly different to the gender and ethnic characteristics of the wider media studies academy. Following selection according to the above professional criteria, the participant group was made up of nine female and ten male participants. Five of the participants are from non-white backgrounds. This is likely to be similar to the wider media studies academy and so the contributions of this participant group can be reasonably taken as indicative of the wider group (In 2012-13, the gender of UK full-time academic staff was reported as 39.3 per cent female, 60.7 per cent male with eighteen per cent of the total identified as from an ethnic-minority background, HESA, 2014)

Potential participants were initially sourced from networking opportunities such as the 2012 Media, Communication and Cultural Studies Association (MeCCSA) Annual Conference and the 2012 Political Studies Association, Media and Politics

Group Annual Conference or were approached through intermediate contacts. Using a direct personal approach to the invitation resulted in a very high participation rate. Everybody approached directly agreed to participate. Nobody actively declined to participate. This delivered an appropriate set of participants as described in Chapter Five, Section 5-2 but it would have been useful, given that it is an area of expansion (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011), to also include a participant from a private provider of higher education. With no direct or indirect links, an attempt was made to contact possible participants derived from institutional online staff profiles. A number of emails were sent but no replies were received and so it was not possible to pursue this. This could be a useful component of a follow-up study. The final participant group (details in Chapter 5, Section 5-2 and Appendix 1) consisted of twelve departmental media academic staff, three media studies graduates, three central university professional staff and one student advisor. These categorisations cover their primary role at the time of the interview but this is an over-simplification as many of participants have experience as media industry professionals and other roles in education and sometimes chose to refer to these experiences when responding to the interview prompts.

Before the interview, each participant was supplied with a project information sheet (Appendix 2) detailing the nature of the project and the processes for handling their contribution. They were then asked to complete and sign a consent form (Appendix 3). The University of Bedfordshire Research Ethics Committee approved the data collection and both the information sheet and the consent form prior to their use on this project (Appendix 5).

4-6 The Interview Process

The decision to choose semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection mechanism for this study was based on the direct relationship between the nature of the data generated by these interviews and the conceptual framework established in Chapter Three. Whilst not without its limitations, the data generated are direct samples of the discourses under consideration. The modalities are significant with the things people say likely to be different to what they might write, for example, on a questionnaire. The assumption here is that, by not supplying the specific details of each prompted topic beyond the general overview of the interview supplied via the project information sheet (Appendix 2) and with the interview taking place within an environment that they feel comfortable in (see below), their spontaneous responses are valid samples of what they regard as 'say-able' – discourse. This allows a reasonable comparison to be made with other discourse samples and other modalities; institutional promotional images and written text, government policy documents, university web sites and secondary research literature.

Nineteen one-to-one semi-structured interviews were carried out face-to-face across calendar years 2012 and 2013. This time period is significant for some of the subsequent analysis as it contextualises the responses of participants in relation to the changing national tuition fee and student finance policies. With the implications of the changes still emerging, the interview date within this overall fieldwork period was potentially significant and so this is explored in more detail in the relevant section (Chapter Seven, Section 7-4)

Lasting from 45-60 minutes with audio recording turned on following the confirmation of consent, all the interviews took place face-to-face in a setting of the participants' choosing. This was often their place of work although where participants shared office accommodation, those interviews were conducted in nearby social spaces. The only limitations were the requirements for a relatively quiet environment to facilitate audio recording and the need to minimise the chances of the interview being interrupted by phones or passers-by. This approach was designed to encourage the participants to feel comfortable about the process so that they could concentrate on the discussion and to encourage them to offer their own views and opinions rather than adopting any particular perceived required responses.

The use of semi-structured interviews within qualitative research in education is well established (Cohen et. al., 2007, p.270; Dilley, 2004). The interviews used here were designed as semi-structured as they were intended to be exploratory rather than test any specific hypothesis. However, some structure was required to ensure that the interviews generated comparative data. This was achieved by developing specific prompts from the general theme of the interview as characterised in the project information sheet. The prompts that were selected had emerged from the literature review as potentially provocative or contentious (for example, '*vocational*') or were at least a feature of the current public discourses (for example, '*tuition fees*').

Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.100) have characterised the way data is generated in this type of interview:

“In a very real sense, then, investigator and respondent together *create* the data of the research. Each influences the other, and the direction that the data gathering will take in the next moment is acutely dependent upon what data have already been collected, and in what manner. There is in the investigator-respondent dyad, a transitivity, a continuous unfolding, a series of iterations. Each shapes the other and is shaped by the other.”

Recognising this phenomenon, the prompting was used to build examples of discourse as the participant was introduced to each theme (customised according to the participant role; graduate; lecturer, advisor etc.) and asked to talk about what it meant in relation to their experiences and practices (see Appendix 4 for an example of interviewer prompts). Once they began talking then the interviewer responses were confined to affirmation of their contribution and prompts to elaborate and clarify. The structuring of the prompts was designed to allow participants to revisit their previous responses and give a more nuanced response. For example, after listening to their response to the term ‘*vocational*’ they were then asked about ‘*employability*’, a tactic that sometimes resulted in the participant returning to their views on the term ‘*vocational*’, adding greater depth.

The bulk of the interview was semi-structured along these lines but at the end of each interview the participant was reminded of the general area under consideration and the purpose of the study and then asked if there was any question the interviewer should have asked but had not. This open-ended prompt allowed the participant to expand on any of their previous responses or raise areas of interest not covered in the interview.

Following the interview the audio recording was submitted to a professional transcription service. The transcription service was asked to provide a verbatim

transcript of the audio recording, including pauses, intonations and non-lexical vocables. This was not to facilitate a fine-grained linguistic analysis but to retain some sense of the response as an oral text, capturing its vitality and immediacy and giving some indication of the way in which it was said.

After transcription, the data were coded thematically to draw together participants' responses to both the initial prompts (for example the introduction of the £9000 p.a. fees regime) and to also collate elements of their responses that covered concepts that emerged from the data when the transcriptions were analysed post-interview (for example the role of collegiality in academic practices). The data were coded using HyperResearch (ResearchWare, 2014), qualitative data analysis software. This allowed the markup and collation of transcript elements according to themes. The data were parsed and coded in two stages with an initial scoping of possibly significant themes following by a more detailed pass through the data, coding responses against the emerging themes.

There then followed a further rationalisation of the themes as interrelated themes were combined (for example, '*practical work*' was amalgamated with '*theory and practice*' and some themes were left in abeyance for possible subsequent analysis outside this project. The HyperResearch software was then used to produce reports for each theme with all the participant responses collated into separate files. These reports were then subsequently parsed for the most succinct and indicative participant responses for inclusion in the analytical chapters (See Section 4-7 below).

4-7 Consideration of Alternative Research Methods

Whilst the methodological approach outlined above builds on the conceptual framework established in Chapter 2 and draws on established research practice in this field it is inevitable that choices have been made and the selection of a particular set of tools and frameworks implies that other approaches have been discarded. These choices are not neutral and the selection of research methods will impact on the kind of knowledge that can be generated and its validity in addressing the research questions. There are many possible, plausible approaches to designing the study and so this section of the chapter explores a range of alternative strategies and evaluates their advantages and disadvantages over the chosen approach. Ultimately, the adoption of a particular approach can only be justified through reference to the research questions and the nature of the answers.

The most significant initial selection in the design of the research study was the choice of a largely qualitative approach over either a wholly quantitative approach or a hybrid method combining both quantitative and qualitative aspects. Whilst a quantitative/qualitative dichotomy often characterises a consideration of research methods in the social sciences, this is not necessarily helpful as Silverman (2010, p13) points out:

“The fact that simple quantitative measures are a feature of some good qualitative research shows that the whole ‘qualitative/quantitative’ dichotomy is open to question. ... At best, they are pedagogic devices for students to obtain a first grip on a difficult field. ... At worst, they are excuses for not thinking...”

So whilst the approach taken here is to pursue the nature of media studies through an in-depth qualitative engagement with a relatively small number of individuals this is supported by the quantitative approach to characterising the provision of undergraduate media studies in England taken in Chapter 1.

Describing the size and diversity of the provision across the higher education sector in terms of the numbers of courses and students allows a subsequent evaluation of the applicability of the qualitative data in terms of the extent to which it is indicative of the discursive practices of interest. Mapping the backgrounds and experiences of the interview participants onto a taxonomy of media studies is an important aspect of validating the data.

A variety of alternative techniques could have been deployed. It may have been logistically easier to conduct the interview remotely via a telephone or video conferencing link. This may have enabled a greater number of participants although if the participant was available for the interview remotely then they would generally also be available face-to-face. To conduct some interviews remotely and some face-to-face would introduce an additional variable and therefore greater complexity into the data. Whilst communication technologies are powerful, effective and now quite familiar to most professionals there is still an element of mediation in the process and the result would still not fully capture the interactions of two people talking to each other (Sellen, 1995).

4-8 Ethical Considerations

This section considers the ethical implications of the methodological framework deployed in this study. This research includes the involvement of both individual participants and the use of public discourse data. The use of data from both these sources requires care and consideration to avoid any negative consequences for the individuals or institution involved. The overall approach to the ethics of this project has been developed in accordance with the British Educational Research Associations ethical guidelines (BERA, 2011) and the University of Bedfordshire Ethical Procedures (University of Bedfordshire, 2011).

The specific ethical considerations within anti-positivist research have been considered by Taylor (2003, p.20):

“Any researcher has ethical obligations, but these are highlighted when the researcher acknowledges her or his own presence within the research process and also abandons the claim to be discovering truth.”

Recognising the significance of these obligations on this project, the data collection process was designed in accordance with the BERA Guidelines with a focus on informed consent. All participants were adults (over 18) and not identified as vulnerable and so were regarded as capable of providing informed consent when supplied with the appropriate project information.

The study involved interviews with academic staff, other higher education professionals, secondary school staff and media graduates who were still also postgraduate students at the time of data collection. Participants were selected

in a way that avoided any personal relationships or professional connections between the researcher and the participants. Specifically, potential University of Bedfordshire participants were not considered where there was a line management connection (staff) or responsibility for assessment (students).

Prior to their interview, participants were supplied with the information sheet (Appendix 2) and consent form (Appendix 3), normally attached to the initial contact email requesting participation. Immediately prior to commencing the audio recording, the participants were asked if they understood the process and offered the opportunity to ask questions and seek clarification before they signed the consent form. They were again reminded that the interview was being audio recorded and that they could withdraw consent at any point during the interview. The interview did not commence until formal consent had been obtained. After the interview was concluded, the participants were asked whether they were happy for everything they said to be used in the study. No objections were raised by any of the participants.

Post-Interview Confidentiality and Anonymity

This study is based around the insights of participants in a number of specific roles within media studies. The relationship between their role and their perceptions is integral to the study. Whilst all contributions were and will be treated professionally and with respect, the inter-connected nature of the area and the possible implicit identification of participants through a combination of their role and their contribution, it was not possible to guarantee that

participants' identity cannot be deduced. As there is an initial presumption of confidentiality and anonymity in research ethics this aspect of the study was foregrounded in the ethical scrutiny process and the specific measures outlined below were put in place.

Possible limits to anonymity and confidentiality are recognised by both the Economic and Social Research Council (2014) and the British Educational Research Association. Section 25 of BERA's (2011) Ethical Guidelines for Educational Research notes that:

"The confidential and anonymous treatment of participants' data is considered the norm for the conduct of research. Researchers must recognize the participants' entitlement to privacy and must accord them their rights to confidentiality and anonymity, unless they or their guardians or responsible others, specifically and willingly waive that right. In such circumstances it is in the researchers' interests to have such a waiver in writing. Conversely, researchers must also recognize participants' rights to be identified with any publication of their original works or other inputs, if they so wish. In some contexts it will be the expectation of participants to be so identified." (British Educational Research Association, 2011)

It is this principle that informed the consent documentation for this study.

Participants were explicitly informed that confidentiality and anonymity cannot be guaranteed, prior to them giving their consent. This specific consent was obtained in writing and participants were also notified in writing of their right to withdraw their consent, without giving a reason, at any point in the interview.

Data Handling

All the collected research data was handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act (1998). Specifically (based on Milligan, 2014):

- Personal data was processed fairly and lawfully.

- Personal data was obtained only for the specified purposes, and was not further processed in any manner incompatible with those purposes.
- Personal data are adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to the purposes for which they are processed.
- Personal data are accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date.
- Personal data will not be kept for longer than is necessary for completion of the study.
- Personal data shall be processed in accordance with the rights of data subjects under the Act.
- Appropriate technical and organisational measures will be taken against unauthorised or unlawful processing of personal data and against accidental loss or destruction of, or damage to, personal data. In this study all data (and backups) that are not being actively processed are encrypted using Apple FileVault (128bit AES).

Minimising Risk

Participants were not stressed beyond what is normal for them. Participants were informed of their option to terminate the interview at any point. The interviewer would have terminated the interview if the interviewee showed any signs of stress.

4-9 Interviews: Reflexivity

Any study that aims to capture and analyse the nature of media studies within the academy and to draw justifiable conclusions needs a conceptual framework such as the one outlined here. Whilst this is true for all research, some features of this particular study require very careful consideration of what the collected data represents and the ways in which valid conclusions can be extracted. The nature of the study needs to be foregrounded at the outset, as it is likely to appear somewhat self-referential and potentially circular in its arguments, a phenomenon noted by Baert and da Silva (2010):

“Self-referential research confronts people with, and challenges, the presuppositions which they hold in virtue of their membership to a larger community, but the precise nature of this collective selfhood remains open. Amongst these different communities is also the academic community to which the social researcher belongs. Indeed, self-referential knowledge will affect the presuppositions of the academic discipline in which the researcher functions.” (p.299)

The author of this study is a white-british, male academic practitioner in the media studies field, researching media studies practice, using tools and techniques that feature heavily in media research as well as in wider social science research; all social practices that closely relate to the social practices under consideration. And this research has been conducted within the context and constraints of the

University of Bedfordshire, a specific Post-92, Million+ university institution, a particular instance of an organisational structure that is considered by the study. So whilst demonstrating the objectivity of any research study can be problematic and unobtainable, at first sight, this study might appear to be particularly subjective and self-referential. There can arise significant questions around the role of the author in the collection of the data, particularly through the use of semi-structured interviews with the approach open to suggestions that the data are untrustworthy. The interactions between the interviewer and interviewee are also dependent on the equity of their relationship (Seidman, 2012). With ‘insider’ research, the interviewee is likely to know the status of the interviewer and may have a preconceived view of the interviewer’s stance in relation to the interview content and so may shape their responses accordingly (Trowler, 2012). In this case, the conceivable power relationships between the interviewer and the participants was varied and complex when considered against factors such as their formal positions within institutional hierarchies, their genders and their ethnic backgrounds.

In this study, the participants occupied various formal positions in their organisations with some being perceivable as ‘*higher*’ status (research professor, Director of Teaching and Learning), some being equivalent (head of department, associate dean) and some being perceivable as ‘*lower*’ status (lecturer, course leader). However, it cannot be assumed that these hierarchies directly translate across the sector. It is not clear that a head of department in a Million+ university would be perceived by interviewer or interviewee as ‘*higher status*’ than a research-active lecturer in a Russell Group university. When this

professional status is overlaid with gender (a male interviewer interviewing both male and female participants) and ethnic background (a white-British interviewer interviewing participants from a variety of backgrounds) then the relationship between the interviewer and a particular participant becomes an individual one with power implicitly negotiated for each interview. This begins with the initial invitation and is followed through in the supplied pre-interview information, the informal preliminaries before the interview starts and the formal interview itself.

All these factors can lead to untrustworthy interview outcomes and so the design of the study needs to recognise these issues and to minimise their impact. (Cohen *et al*, 2001; Newby, 2010). However, taking some care to conceptualise the approach and recognise its limitations, there are also strengths to draw on. With a researcher embedded in the practices under consideration there is the potential for rapid insights into the main issues and also the possibility of greater acceptance of the researcher by the study participants with perhaps more openness that derives from being on the 'inside'. This gives the researcher a particular perspective on the domain. This approach is recognised in the methodological research that relates theoretical and conceptual positions with the use of interviews. R C Bennett in personal correspondence with Martyn Denscome (cited in Denscome, 1995) notes that, "*I would like the interviews to be assessed much more from the perspective of texts with lives attached—the interaction of potentially volatile subjectivities*". So rather than a pure data collection exercise, this study becomes a dialogue with greater richness and depth as the participant and researcher may share a body of knowledge, experiences and values but, given the diversity within the sector, may also have quite radically different values

and approaches. This leads to fascinating researcher/participant conversations that do appear to capture something of the essence of media studies practices but without the conceptual framework developed here they might be dismissible as probably anecdotal reinforcement of the author's preconceived ideas and opinions. Rather than express the interview process as a series of interviewer 'questions' followed by specific respondent 'answers', the interviews are characterised as a set of interviewer 'prompts' and the associated 'participant responses', recognising that this gives rise to data that can legitimately be regarded as samples of discourses that can be compared with the available sources of public discourses.

Although this conceptual framework is widely used in higher education studies, some potential problems within this domain have been identified by Trowler (2001, p.196). Trowler's paper directly addresses the extent to which academic staff can be and are "captured" by external, institutional discourses and any oppositional discourses that arise in parallel. Trowler concludes that this is a valid approach but that:

"There is a danger of over-extending this argument to a position which asserts the existence of a semiotic democracy in which all texts are 'read' in creative ways and filtered through localized cultures, ideologies and communities of practice." (ibid.)

Three reasons are given for this; appropriate alternative social structures are required to facilitate alternative discourses; oppositional discourses may be unstable with individuals using different, context-sensitive and potentially contradictory "discursive repertoires" and, finally; institutional structures and the

processes that build them (for example, staff requirement policies) can be designed in a way that filters oppositional discourses.

The second of these reasons is a potential problem in this study. It is assumed that interviewing the participants individually on a face-to-face basis in a location they choose and find comfortable together with an interviewer who presents as both a researcher and professional practitioner in media studies, leads to a valid sample of discourse that characterises the social practices under consideration. It is possible that the participants are deploying their research interview “discursive repertoire”.

The interview process and the interviewee/interviewer relationship deployed here does mitigate this potential problem and the evidence from the transcripts shows that, over the course of the extended conversations, the participants appear to be accessing a range of discourses and are certainly not displaying an uncritical capture by dominant external or institutional discourses. The interview transcripts offer rich and varied samples of oppositional discourses and therefore the subtle and complex power relationships identified by Foucault.

4-10 Transcripts: Reflexivity

The nineteen interviews generated 910 minutes (over 15 hours) of audio recordings resulting in over 165,000 words of transcription. The processing of these data and their reduction down to the fragments reproduced here can never be a neutral process and is likely to have had as much impact on the resultant findings as the participant selection and interviewing processes.

Following the interviews, the audio data files were sent to a professional transcription company specialising in research interviews. This provided a rapid turnaround and high-quality transcription but as it was carried out by a number of different transcribers, the results were varied. None of them could be expected to be experts in the topics being discussed and therefore the transcriptions were checked and corrected for the misreading of technical and jargon terms, alongside the original audio.

Once all the transcripts were in place, they were thematically coded. A further selection process was then applied to the collections of coded fragments to exclude duplication and/or '*uninteresting*' observations. It is recognised that research of this nature is co-constituted by the researcher, participants and their relationship (Finlay, 2002) and it is within this process of selection and refinement that the researcher has significant impact. Although the researcher cannot legitimately fabricate participant responses, the omission of some responses is a necessary part of the analysis if a coherent picture is to emerge from the data. Finlay's response to this issue is to point to reflexivity as a safeguard, defined as:

"Thoughtful, conscious self-awareness. Reflexive analysis in research encompasses continual evaluation of subjective responses, intersubjective dynamics, and the research process itself. It involves a shift in our understanding of data collection from something objective that is accomplished through detached scrutiny of "what I know and how I know it" to recognizing how we actively construct our knowledge." (ibid. p.532)

It is this reflexivity that will be foregrounded through the analysis of the rich, insightful, humourous and varied participant contributions that follow.

Chapter Five

Data Analysis – Media Studies - Discourses of Identity

5-1 Introduction

This first data analysis chapter is an exploration of the interview data and related public discourses with a theme of discourses of '*identity*'. Here, '*identity*' relates to both the participants' portrayal of their professional identities (Ford, 2006) and their depiction of an identity for '*media studies*' as a subject in higher education (Kogan, 2000). The analysis in this chapter is primarily directed towards addressing research question one (See Chapter One, Section 1-7).

The professional identities established by the participants allow their subsequent responses to be characterised in terms of their current role and previous experiences. The multiplicity of complex roles and experiences problematises the association of the participants with specific, delimited categorisations but does provide rich samples of complex discursive practices.

The identity of '*media studies*' is seen here as constructed through public and academic discursive practices and, as a subject that is defined in terms of a specific area of cultural and economic activity (the mass media) rather than a

discipline or methodology, it is the relationships between '*media studies*' and the '*media industries*' that underpins the participants responses to questions of subject identity and so they are explored in this chapter to frame the subsequent chapters that consider the discourses of '*academic practice*' and discourses of '*public policy*' in relation to '*media studies*'.

Although centered on '*media studies*' academic practices, responses from all the participants (01-19) are used in this chapter to examine the discursive practices of media studies graduates, central university staff and a secondary school headteacher in addition to those of media studies academic staff.

5-2 Participant Identity: “I’m probably quite an odd case”

Introduction

“The use of the word ‘community’ in discussions of higher education courts two problems. First, it is a warm glow word which implies good relations when they may not exist or may not even be necessary for good working. Secondly, it obfuscates the need for close analysis of roles within and beyond education in which the relationships may be that of dependency or exchange or a hard business of establishing *quids* for *quos*.” (Kogan, 2000, p.209)

At the start of each interview, each participant was invited to describe their professional role and to give a short account of their career. This provided background factual information whilst prompting them to start talking about themselves. This provided important contextual information that could be compared to their subsequent responses. Responses from all participants are included in this section.

Analysis

Most participants began with a statement of their job title and then began to describe their formal activities and accountabilities. For example;

Current job has the title of Teaching Enhancement Developer. [...] However, [...] it’s enhancing teaching in many different ways I’m learning so it’s not quite what I thought it was. It is working to improve student experience in learning terms by assisting staff. (Participant 01)

At the moment I am in charge of Masters courses in media subjects for <Institution>. I am about to become a separate role in charge of research in the areas of media, art and design, English and performing arts. (Participant 04)

At the moment I'm working as a researcher on Embarrassing Bodies on Channel 4 and Embarrassing Bodies: Live on Channel 4.
(Participant 05)

Okay. My current role is academic registrar and that's in the quality directorate which obviously approves and reviews courses and is supportive of the development of courses. And administers quality assurance processes with regards to external examiners and their responses, (...) queries of, of students with regards to regulations and so forth. (Participant 12)

Yeah (...) my name is <name> I'm the head teacher here at <school> and have been since 2003. (...) <school>'s an 11 to 18 mixed academy of about 1,020 (...) students. (Participant 13)

Whilst consisting of basic factual information, a closer reading of the responses can give some insight into the aspects of the role that participants wish to emphasise through looking at the prominence they give them in their responses. For example Participant 15 (course leader, BA(Hons) Broadcast Journalism, Russell Group University) immediately replied with;

Yes. I'm programme leader of the (...) undergraduate degree in broadcast journalism which is a three year BA honours degree. (...) And it's accredited by the BJTC. (Participant 15)

This response indicated that BJTC (Broadcast Journalism Training Council) accreditation was at the forefront of the participant's thinking at the time of the interview and provided a hook for later in the interview when a further prompt provided very useful insights into the tensions between a Russell Group academic research-intensive setting and the associated professional accreditation body.

A similar phenomenon can be observed in the response of Participant 18 (Principal Lecturer and Sub-Dean (Quality Enhancement), Million+ university);

My current role is principal lecturer in media, sub-dean of quality for the faculty of creative arts, technologies and science. What I do within that is manage the quality assurance and enhancement processes of the faculty, and support, generally, the academic quality managements within the faculty, with particular reference to new course development, the monitoring of courses, the external examination of courses those would be the main things. (Participant 18)

This participant starts by stating their role; “my current role **is**” but then immediately switches to describing their activities; “What I **do** within that is...” and that element of their response indicates that whilst their headline role is as a Principal Lecturer, their activities as Sub-Dean (Quality Enhancement) appear to take precedence for them. This can then be used to contextualise their subsequent responses in relation to course design and the role of formal approval and review in that process.

Having established the participants’ current role they were then prompted to describe their career leading up to their role. This gave the participants a further opportunity to construct their identity in relation to the study and to provide further important contextual information regarding their experiences and wider institutional affiliations. This confirmed that the selection of participants has resulted in an appropriate group of those involved in or interacting with undergraduate media studies in England.

Central University Staff

Staff with a central university professional role with a responsibility for some aspects of academic practice outside media studies departments were careful to

establish their academic credentials as part of their account of their journey to their current role:

So just briefly, in terms of experience of course design, I first started designing courses in round about 1998. I was designing HNDs and degree courses in then a polytechnic in Wales. (Participant 02)

Okay. (...) I was a senior lecturer in German at various universities that was Thames Valley University which is now the University of West London and Oxford Brookes and at some stage I became a what they- at the stage called programme manager... (Participant 12)

This can be seen as pointing to a rather defensive position where academic credibility is seen as important in the process of influencing departmental teaching staff. Participant 02 addressed this:

I don't (...) tell a lot of people about that [laughter] but it does mean that I do have, a) some experience of how it happens and should happen but also some experience of the difficulties that people actually wrestle with when they're trying to design courses. (Participant 02)

His response indicates that he does not feel the need to explicitly establish his academic credentials with course teams but that he sees his experience of 'doing it' as important to his identity as the university's Director of Teaching and Learning.

Media Academic Staff

I have been involved in the media in various capacities, really since the beginning of the 1970s, originally for six years as a media technician in Hornsey Art College and then as a student I was part of the first cohort and, as far as I know, the first ever BA course in media studies for the Polytechnic of Central London, 1975 to 1978... (Participant 04)

Okay my current role is course leader for the BA film and television production in the arts school here. That entails management and development of the course curriculum, delivery of the modules management of a team and collaboration with a team in delivering the modules which cover a range of film and television production skills. It also includes extra curricula development as well which supports the main curriculum. strand. (Participant 06)

So I spent about eleven years with the BBC then worked freelance as a drama director and then started working as a consultant on television productions in various countries, well mainly, well only Eastern Europe and then (...) decided to apply for this job and got the job. (Participant 07)

Head of the School of Media which means exactly what you'd expect it to mean. That is looking after six degree courses, line managing the course leaders of those six courses. As well as two senior technicians, one in the area of photography and one in film. I'm also an Associate Dean of the Faculty of Media and Performance. And what that means [laughing] is I've got kind of more institutionally wide responsibilities. (Participant 08)

I was living with a lot of students and I thought I could do this so I went back to education, did an access course at Brighton College of Technology and then went to Sussex University, did my degree there in media production. (Participant 09)

So I started teaching in 1997 when I was doing my PhD, and I taught for a couple of years on the Media Master's Degree at Westminster before coming over to the <university>, which was then <previous name>, having then, teaching on the Undergraduate BA Media Production... (Participant 10)

And here I was appointed as course leader for media studies, with a view to revalidating the programme, within the first eighteen months. So I came in and we went through validation, quite successfully, and then about six months ago my head of department stood down. I'd been acting as a head of department for the last six months with my, probably, interview tomorrow, to be made HoD. (Participant 11)

I'm probably- I'm probably quite an odd case although probably everybody says that to you but (...) I haven't ever been a journalist. (...) I actually came straight out of a degree in media (...), media and communications and I started working as a researcher... ..once my

full time research career changed in 2007 to become a lecturer which was a kind of natural thing because the grants that I had and w-was working on had, had changed... (Participant 15)

I'm senior lecturer in politics but I teach on a politics and media degree programme - in a media department. So yeah, and that involves teaching, it involves research, it involves, we're just in the process of thinking about recruitment and open days, so the whole. Everything, yes basically, yeah, everything. (Participant 16)

I left school [sigh] in the late sixties, Grammar school, A levels, went straight into (...) newspapers, an indentureship as we used to call them (...) at a local paper, did (...) a year's professional qualification, was in local newspapers for seven years and then went to Fleet Street and worked in national newspapers for twenty-eight years. (...) At the end of that period, I did a master's degree validated by Nottingham Trent that was in media and I started doing some visiting lecturing first at what's now Southampton Solent... (Participant 17)

[Sighs]. Eclectically, and randomly. [Laughs]. So... [Sighs]. In 1995, I finished my PhD, which was entitled James Joyce, Modernism and Post-Modernism, which looked at the relationship between modernism and post-modernism in twentieth century culture, through the prism of the work of James Joyce, particularly *Finnegan's Wake*. I'd done a little bit of teaching before that. I say, a little bit I'd done some...some tutorial teaching at the university where I was doing my PhD, actually, my doctorate, which was Oxford, and I previously, between the ages of seventeen and eighteen, taught at a rural state school in Zimbabwe, as you do. [Laughs] (Participant 18)

My Masters is in English literature. I was researching eighteenth century British travellers to India, when I got a commonwealth scholarship to do a PhD. And the reason why I'm telling you about this is because my PhD is about media education. It's about using media for education. I did a PhD on using television to teach English in India. But even before I finished my PhD, I got a job at the BBC, and I worked at the BBC for eleven years. (Participant 19)

Media Graduates

I work for the <Institution A> as a Media Technician. I work primarily with the media department. And I teach, er, I don't teach; I instruct the students on how to use cameras, any sort of media equipment including sound, lighting, location lighting and digital

recorders, all sorts of video cameras whether they be tape based or solid based. And that is my general role. (Participant 03)

...and also various other things, but then after that, it was a bit hard for a couple of months, but I decided I didn't know what I wanted to do, but I knew because I did TV production at university and I got some work experience at Sports Relief, and then as a runner, and... ...then I got offered a job as a researcher, based in Birmingham for The Gadget Show... (Participant 05)

Currently trainee lecturer at <College> (...) teaching on BTEC and foundation degree urm studying for professional doctorate at <University> which finishes in April and that was a career decision for (...) a more stable income and sort of focus career (...) after ten years as a film maker, festival director and sort of project film educator. (Participant 14)

Student Advisor

Went to university, to Nottingham University, did maths degree. And then I did one year PGCE at Nottingham (...) as well. Then I went into teaching for a year. Then I left and went into the RAF... (Participant 13)

These responses demonstrate the range of background and affiliations of the participants. Their professional and personal journeys have all resulted in an interaction with media studies and participation in these 'snapshot' interviews that capture their ideas, pre-conceptions, values and experiences. Their response was typically crafted chronologically.

Summary and Conclusions

Based on the analysis of the provision of undergraduate media courses in England and their distribution across various types of higher education providers, these responses, in their diversity and depth, are an appropriate data set for the

qualitative research aimed at addressing the research questions posed in Chapter One, Section 1-7. Collectively, the responses cover a range of factors;

Further Education College	Participant 09
Teaching-Intensive Universities	Participants 01, 02, 03, 04, 05, 06, 07, 12, 18, 19
Research-Intensive Universities	Participants 04, 15, 16, 17
Small Institutions	Participants 09, 08, 11
Large Institutions	Participants 06, 07, 15
Specialist Art Schools	Participants 06, 07, 08
Media, Communications and Journalism Departments	Participants 04, 11, 15, 18, 19
Media delivered by non-media specialist department	Participant 16
Distance Learning Delivery	Participant 10
Media Graduates	Participant 03, 05, 10, 14, 17
Student Advisors	Participant 13
Central University Functions	Participants 01, 02, 12, 18
Media Industry Experience	Participants 01, 04, 05, 06, 07, 14, 17, 19

This categorisation of the participants demonstrates the complexity in attempting to assign specific individuals to clearly delimited categories. Each participant constructs a specific unique identity through discursive practices that build a narrative based on a selection of their experiences. Participants' experiences of varying media studies settings, experiences of professional practice in the media industries and experiences as students themselves all combine in different ways to provide a '*back story*' to their current role.

This self-constructed identity can be considered alongside an institutionally defined identity (Bilot, 2010) that can result from a move from a '*community of scholars*' to a managerial imposition of a role and associated identity (Harris, 2006). As institutions begin to define themselves in relation to others through a discourse of '*competition*', academic identities based on identification with a

subject/discipline rather than an individual institution can become increasingly problematic.

5-3 A Rationale for Media Studies: “Quite a tricky question”

Introduction

Having established the background of the participants the interview moved to their views on the purpose of media studies – a rationale for studying the subject and its place within the English higher education sector. This is a complex topic and it is important to set the participant responses within historical and contemporary contexts as a means of relating them to each other and to the discourses that frame media studies. This analysis needs to be considered alongside Chapter Two, Section 2-3 as the discourses displayed here relate to and reflect the historical development of the subject. Responses from thirteen of the participants are presented as part of the analysis in this section.

Analysis

“This course does not claim to be a professional training designed to provide suitably skilled employees for the media industry. The present recruitment and training policies of the industry must limit the contribution this course can make and job opportunities are likely to remain limited. However, for those students who do find employment in this area, the course will provide wider perspectives and, hopefully, an enhanced sense of social responsibility” (Garnham, 1975, p.1)

“This course is designed to set high standards for professional achievement in specific media industry roles, and prepare you for the challenge and opportunity of a multi-skilled portfolio career.” (University of Westminster website, 2014)

These course descriptions are taken from published course information and describe essentially the same course. The first is taken from course information distributed by the course leader, Nick Garnham, to the first cohort of students entering the BA Media Studies programme at the Polytechnic of Central London; the first undergraduate Media Studies course in the UK. Thirty-nine years later

this course and institution has evolved into BA Contemporary Media Practice at the University of Westminster. The second quote is taken from the web-based publicity materials that describe the course for prospective students. Comparing the descriptions from 1975 and 2014 demonstrates some aspects of the evolution of university promotional material over that period and can be seen as a manifestation of the scenario outlined by Andrew McGettigan as an outcome of the coalition government's reform of higher education following the 2010 general election:

“As universities and colleges are forced to operate in commercial terrain, it is basic business imperatives that come to the fore. Our habits of thought about higher education are no longer appropriate for this new terrain.” (McGettigan, 2013, p.ix)

“In effect, the majority of universities will need to become more akin to commercial operations, charging for services. Faced with competition from profit-distributing entities with rich backers, it is not clear whether maintaining charitable status will be viable in the long-run for most.” (McGettigan, 2013, p.5)

This emphasis on promoting student recruitment in order to compete with other institutions was not a revolutionary change post-2010 but it did give rise to significantly increased spending on marketing and recruitment with seventy institutions responding to a *Times Higher Education* freedom of information request reporting a collective spend on student marketing of £36 million in 2012-13, an increase of 14.7 per cent on the 2011-12 spend and an increase of thirty-three per cent on the 2010-11 spend (Sandler-Clarke, 2014).

“The market for high calibre applicants is becoming increasingly competitive, necessitating ever more sophisticated means of promoting and securing interest, and at all times we must be able to make ‘the right impression.’” (University of Manchester policy document, 2009)

Responding to the discourse of ‘*competition*’, universities seek an advantage by appealing to prospective students’ desire to enter a successful career on graduation and to make explicit links between the course on offer and the employment and career opportunities that may follow it.

“There are many reasons for going to university, including – naturally – a love of the subject to be studied, and the opportunity to experience a different way of life. Higher education is much more than a production line for work-ready graduates.

Nevertheless, there is no denying that people see higher education as a stepping stone to a good job. In 2010, 73% of the students who took part in the Sodexo University Lifestyle Survey said they went to university to improve their job opportunities.” (Lord Baker of Dorking in Lowden *et al.*, 2011, p.iii)

In this preface to a report on employers’ perceptions of the employability of new graduates, Lord Baker recognises a broad rationale for degree-level study although perhaps in a rather perfunctory, tokenistic way. He then asserts “*nevertheless*” and draws on compelling statistical evidence for the link between student recruitment and graduate employment outcomes.

A most striking example of this discourse as represented by the public dissemination of information by a university is the following image (Figure 5-1):



Figure 5-1 (University of Bedfordshire, 2013)

This eye-catching image was used by the University of Bedfordshire to promote a series of lectures to be given by alumni with current students as the intended audience. This image is intended to evoke the very widely used (Lewis (2014) has published an extensive collection of examples) and adapted 'ascent of man' image that originated as the frontispiece (Figure 5-2) to Thomas Huxley's *Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature* (Huxley, 1863) in which Huxley argues that Darwin's theory of evolution applies equally to humans as it does to other forms of life:

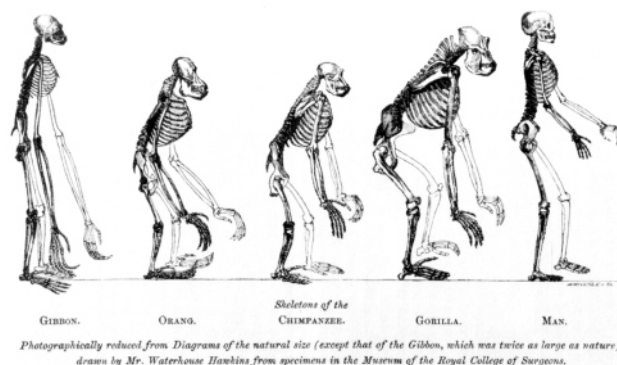


Figure 5-2 – Frontispiece to Evidence as to Man's Place in Nature

From this original frontispiece, the image has been appropriated and developed to represent concepts such as ‘*progress*’, ‘*advancement*’, ‘*development*’ and ‘*evolution*’ innumerable times (Lewis, 2014). The choice of this image as a promotional tool for an alumni lecture series by the University of Bedfordshire is therefore a powerful indication of the way the institution depicts student advancement and successful outcomes. In figure 5-1 the original component photographs that have been composited into a poster have been manipulated so that the initial crouching figure is followed by four upright depictions of the student that increase in size incrementally— the student grows physically with each iteration. There are also elements of clothing that change across the images as the student ‘*progresses*’ towards a dark, corporate suit and, in the final image, the briefcase disappears to leave a confident figure striding into the future. The final image we are left with is of a white male corporate employee as the graduate outcome ideal, leaving little scope for the diversity and complexities of students, higher education and the rationale for studying a degree course. For media studies students specifically, this probably does not represent their idea of a creative practitioner in the media industries and does little to challenge a perception of the mainstream media as dominated by white, middle-class, males.

Engaging with this discourse, the prompt to discuss the rationale for media studies surprised a number of participants and certainly did not result in clichéd answers. Some participants took some time, ‘thinking aloud’ to formulate their response:

[sigh] (...) gosh that’s a- quite a tricky question. (.....) Well there’s a demand... (Participant 15)

Notably, Participant 07 took some time, at first replying with questions rather than answers:

That's a very, really interesting question, yeah it is, you know, why do we m- so many of them? Do we need them, w- what are we supposed to produce, are we supposed to produce technicians, are we supposed to produce film makers, programme makers, are we supposed to produce people that appreciate media more and it depends on whether you concentrate, you know, on the theoretical studies more than practical?... (Participant 07)

The first of these 'question' responses by Participant 07 makes reference to a view of media studies that implies a supply and demand view of the provision – “*Why do we m- so many of them?*”, echoing Participant 15 (“*Well there's a demand*”). This points to the idea that large numbers of media studies graduates are undesirable or that these graduates are produced to meet a specific demand and that supply should be limited. The participant then goes on to expand on this by speculating on what this demand might be – “*what are we supposed to produce?...*”. This implies that the participant feels that there is some externally derived answer to this and that he sees himself as a passive receiver of this view rather than actively involved in defining a rationale for media studies. The subsequent responses then set up one of the recurrent themes in this study with a dichotomy; is it the purpose of media studies courses to produce media industry professionals (“*technicians*”, “*film makers*”, “*programme makers*”) or some broader personal and societal purpose (“*people that appreciate media more*”)?

The response from Participant 07 can be considered in the light of his background and current role. He is based in a post-92 university although his

department has a long tradition as an art school with media courses delivered alongside courses in fine art, illustration, fashion etc.

Some participants see *producing industry professionals/enabling personal development* as a false dichotomy with there being no reason for a course not to deliver both but it is a recurrent theme in the responses:

In journalism, people used to be trained on newspapers; they used to be trained in-house; there were apprenticeships, indentures: those are very rare now because the companies say they cannot afford to run them. So effectively, that has to be delivered somewhere else. The other part of it is that a lot of the people who go into media courses are not going to go into the media, [...] and as such, it's about developing the individual, developing the individual's knowledge, understanding within an area and they are really transferrable skills. (Participant 01)

[laughter] Too many. Yeah, there are too many media students, eh. What do they do with themselves? (Participant 02)

We're not in the business of simply equipping people with a set of very specifiable skills. We're educating people's ability to think and alright, we're doing it in the context that makes them think about media content and how it comes to be but [...] we're also educating them to think, and that's what universities do, I think. That's the real mission. (Participant 04)

Responses from participants outside universities showed very similar perceptions to those inside. Participant 13 (a secondary school headteacher with experience of advising sixth-formers on applying to university) perceived media studies as:

If I was looking at it from what I sort of generally think (...) is a mixture of sociology (...) it's a mixture of English (...) probably some history (confused) in there as well. (...), you've probably got film (confused) (...). I'm just thinking about all the different subjects, that you sort of pouring it all together (...) it's very much cultural, c-communication studies, I would imagine it's a broad range of those topics (...) put together under the title media? (confused) (.....) It's not about studying adverts, it's- it's going to be all about the theories behind it. (Participant 13)

The participant has no direct experience of media studies (mathematics graduate, professional experience in the RAF and secondary school teaching) but still perceived media studies as inter-disciplinary (*"mixture of sociology ... English ... history ... film"*, *"pouring it all together"*) and covering areas of culture and communication. There is no mention of practical media production although the view that *"it's not about studying adverts"* is curious; it may be that the participant sees that as a rather superficial activity or that advertising is more likely to be part of a marketing course. A further possibility is that the study of adverts is seen as wholly contained within overt advertising courses in higher education. There is certainly a perception that media studies contains a significant amount of theoretical work though (*"it's going to be all about the theories behind it"*).

To illustrate the variation within the group of media academic staff participants it is worth considering the differences between the responses of Participants 06 and 15:

I can only speak about our course and what we aim to deliver with our course and that is to prepare students to enter the film and television industry with a distinct foundation in technical competence and production competence. (Participant 06)

...from the point of view from a Russell Group research-led university (...) we (...) have some of the leading academics in the field (...) who (...) are researching public communications and political communications and how the media (high tone) has an impact on society. (angry) (...) So (...) we have quite a lot to say (...) and a lot of knowledge about the effects of journalism in society and as part of being an academic I would say we have a responsibility to pass some of that knowledge on to future journalists. (Participant 15)

The starting point for these two participants is different although they both focus on the relevance and applicability of their course to the students that study it.

Participant 06 (Course leader in an art school within a post-92 university) succinctly describes the rationale for the course as preparing students for a specific sector of the media industries (*“prepare students to enter the film and television industry”*) and that this is achieved through the development of particular competences (*“a distinct foundation in technical competence and production competence”*). In contrast, Participant 15 (Course leader in a communications studies department within a Russell Group university) leads with the research activity in the subject (*“...are researching public communications and political communications”*), *“we have quite a lot to say (...) and a lot of knowledge”*) and relates that to the students at the end (*“we have a responsibility to pass some of that knowledge on to future journalists”*). However, whilst each participant starts from a different point they both see their students as future media industry professionals (*“...enter the film and television industry”* and *“on to future journalists”*) so these two individuals see the ultimate aim of the course as

similar but demonstrate their disparate institutional contexts in the way they articulate the rationale for their courses.

For other participants, the development of media literacy as a means of empowering individuals was at the forefront of their response:

I think it's important in a (...) in a modern society, a modern democracy if you like - that people have the language to be able to deconstruct programmes that they see, to be able to kind of make rational decisions, to be active audiences if you like. I think it's a very important subject in that sense. (Participant 09)

You know, I think, I think, as, I think media literacy should be taught alongside English and Maths. [laughter] I just think it's absolutely crucial and I think media I suppose, to me, stands alongside sociology and it stands alongside politics and it's like, if you want to make sense of the way in which our society works, we have to understand the way in which we communicate about our society and the vested interests that impact on the way in which we talk about our society, the way in which we make sense of our society. (Participant 16)

Because of its currency, its importance, it's societal importance, (...) I would argue (...) from my bit that it's psychological importance and it's... it's (...) psychosocial importance. (Participant 17)

First function is, in...in my view, something which is absolutely key to contemporary citizenship, which is media literacy, and just as studying English literature doesn't necessarily turn you into a poet...indeed, it may prevent [laughs] you from becoming a poet...so, studying the media doesn't necessarily mean you're going to work in the media... (Participant 18)

These participants come from a variety of backgrounds which can be related to their views in this area. Participant 17 entered higher education following a long career as a journalist on national newspapers. After teaching in a variety of higher education institutions he is now a postgraduate research student at a small research-intensive university. Participants 16 and 18 both have experience of working in a range of higher education institutions but both have spent their

career in higher education with limited media industry experience. Their responses both include references to *media literacy*, a common though potentially contestable term that invites further investigation as it may capture a rationale for media studies that might be distinctive from or may be complementary to an industry training view of media studies. The views of these participants (I6 and I8 explicitly and I7 by implication; “*societal importance*”) highlight a rationale for media studies that is based on a position that understanding the relationships between the media and society would be of universal benefit and that studying the media can only be of further benefit, providing something analogous to the US concept of a *liberal arts* education (Chrucky, 2003), an idea that has acquired some traction in the UK with the introduction of a BA Modern Liberal Arts course at the University of Winchester in 2010, which includes the study of film (University of Winchester, 2014). Kings College London offers a BA Liberal Arts course (also including film studies) and much of the curriculum of the New College of the Humanities (NCH) takes a liberal arts approach. Accepting its first undergraduate students in 2012, NCH is a private institution with a broad rationale:

“Study of the humanities provides personal enrichment, intellectual training, breadth of vision, and the well-informed, sharply questioning cast of mind needed for success in life in our complex and rapidly changing world.” (New College of the Humanities website, 2014a)

This view echoes the responses of Participants I6, I7 and I8 although the institutional context may be quite different with the private New College of the Humanities targeting high-tariff applicants in its promotional material (“*As a very general guide the College typically seeks AAA at A-level*”, New College of the Humanities, 2014b) where as participants I6, I7 and I8 represent a broad range

of public institutional backgrounds including large post-92 universities, small research-intensive universities and the Russell Group.

I... I've thought quite a lot about why we have media courses in UK universities. I think it's wrong, and I think the reason why we have them is because of what happened to universities. We would never have had media courses in universities had we had the old Poly system. You know, the media courses would have been in polytechnics. And if you look at how media courses are divided up, if you like, the pre-1992 universities, you know, the redbrick universities, and the old...the older universities, I mean, places like Oxford and Cambridge, of course, don't even deign to do media, it's beneath them. (Participant 19)

But then you come...along come the 1992 universities, and really, it is about moving polys into unis. And the media courses they begin to offer are much more about...less about ideas and the pushing of ideas, and more about, how do you shoot? How do you edit? What do you actually do? What's the ethos of working in the industry? And universities, post 1992 universities, which offer those kinds of courses, are in a difficult position, because on the one hand...and are schizophrenic, because on the one hand, they want to imitate industry, because they think the students...the employability agenda is very high, especially now that they've got £9,000 fees, but even before then, you know, their employability agenda was high. So it was like, what can we do to get students into jobs? But...so therefore, you want to try and, in your courses, you want to try and emulate what happens in industry, but these are universities. (Participant 19)

Participant 19 responds to the question of a rationale for media studies with reference to the institutional context and the development of UK higher education since 1992 and the designation of polytechnics as universities. This participant sees the removal of the distinction (at least in institutional title) as problematic and with an implied view of the distinctive roles of polytechnics and universities, sees difficulties in providing a clear rationale for media studies delivered in former polytechnics now designated as universities: *"post-1992 universities, which offer those kinds of courses, are in a difficult position, because on the one hand...and are schizophrenic, because on the one hand, they want to imitate*

industry” and “*you want to try and emulate what happens in industry, but these are universities*”. The implication of this is that the participant retains a view that the rationale for courses in polytechnics was based around the requirements of specific industries whilst university courses were not. So she describes media studies as problematic once it is delivered within an institution designated as a university with media studies naturally seen as forming part of a polytechnic/post-92 university provision. There is an emphasis on post-92 provision providing employable graduates to the media industries and on pre-92 universities pursuing a broader personal development rationale closer to the responses provided by Participants 16, 17 and 18. Whilst the 1992 reforms are now over twenty years old the perception of both pre and post-92 institutions and the courses they run is still influenced by their historical position with regard to that divide. If it ever was possible to neatly partition higher education institutions into these categories then that divide has now blurred and transient mission group membership has led to increasingly fractured alliances and groupings. However, at least for this participant, the distinction between former polytechnics and pre-92 universities underpins perceptions of the role of media studies. This is further complicated by the rationale cited for earlier expansions in higher education provision which also embraced the provision of industry-relevant courses. Media studies is seen as a ‘*new university*’ course with a focus on employability in the media industries even though, as shown by the breadth of responses by participants in this study, media studies is delivered in a wide variety of institutional contexts and with a rationale that often embraces both a functional approach to the media industries and employment and as a broader

vehicle for personal intellectual development and what Johnson and Morris (2010) term '*critical citizenship*', building on the ideas of Freire (1972, 1976) and others.

Summary and Conclusions

The participant responses when asked to formulate a rationale for media studies contain all the discourse elements identified in Chapter Two. At the core of this is a public policy-led instrumental discourse of '*media training*' and an oppositional academic discourse of '*media education*'. The analysis here shows that this '*media education*' discourse remains a force within the academy and the power relationship between the two is finely balanced. A striking feature of the participant responses in this area is the uniformity across the variation in provision. A superficial expectation might be that the lecturer in a mixed-economy further/higher education college delivering a foundation degree would be more aligned with the '*media training*' discourse whilst the lecturer in a Russell Group university would be more aligned with the '*media education*' discourse. However, the data here does not support that, possibly because the participants' backgrounds show that they have experience of other settings. Participant 09 studied at the University of Sussex prior to entering a career in FE/HE teaching and so has experience of a pre-92 university. The responses of Participants 09 and 15 are both part of a '*media education*' discourse showing that this is deeply embedded in the media academy and that government and industry-led initiatives have done little to shift the axis of the subject from the historical roots of Whannel (1964), Alvarado *et al.* (1987), Masterman (1985) and others.

5-4 Vocational: “Okay, the V-word”

Introduction

Following an articulation of their rationale for media studies, the participants were invited to expand on this by talking about the terms ‘*vocational*’ and ‘*employability*’ two elements of the media studies and higher education public discourses that feature heavily in public and institutional policy (for example, Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2014; Yorke, 2006). In their guidance web pages for university applicants, QS World University Rankings clearly set up a distinction between the ‘*vocational*’ and what they refer to as ‘*traditional*’ or ‘*liberal arts*’ degrees:

“weighs up the pros and cons of doing **vocational degree** as opposed to what we’re going to call, for the sake of convenience, a ‘traditional’ or **liberal arts degree**” (QS World University Rankings, 2012).

This sets up a dichotomy, albeit in North American terms, that builds on the discussion of a rationale for media studies and so participant perceptions of the term vocational provides an opportunity to explore this in greater depth, particularly in the next section (Section 5-5) where distinctions between ‘*vocational*’ and ‘*employability*’ are considered. Responses from thirteen participants contribute to the analysis in this section.

Analysis

When prompted to articulate their perceptions of the term ‘*vocational*’ in relation to media studies, a number of participants gave their definition of the term:

Definitions

I would understand it as, [...] a vocation course is one which is designed largely around the goal of producing a set of [...] definable technical skills. (Participant 04)

Well, except lawyers are a vocation and teachers are a vocation so there is a high level of professionalism in this but it's light skills and other things. (Participant 02)

If you mean focused for a specific vocation, like, you know, you're doing a journalism course because you're going to be a journalist, yes, they can be but equally, then can be generalist as well. That's so they're not always vocational for that single vocation. (Participant 01)

And then you're saying vocational it's probably you know a- another interpretation of that would be that they learn by doing and reflecting on it rather than reading and studying theoretical texts. (Participant 07)

I guess when, when I'm sitting in meetings and people are asking me about what, you know, is your course vocational?, You naturally just slip into kind of sort of saying well students get jobs in the media. (Participant 09)

For me (...) whether it's vocational or professional, for me it's the same thing. (Participant 12)

I think with vocational courses it is where you physically go out into the real world and actually look at how you apply that theory. (...) In a way that does actually work 'cause you can still apply the theory (happy) [slight laugh] in theory. (Participant 12)

Vocational to me means something that equips you to go out and (...) have a skill that enables you to do a job. Usually (...) practical I think (Participant 15)

Produce students who can work in the industry, [laughs] very simple, and not just as runners, because I mean, yes, we all know that students have to enter the media industry very much as a runner, and

I think that is a sad reflection of what the industry is, and I think that that is wrong; the industry shouldn't be doing that. (Participant 19)

These responses show the participants have a generally shared view of the meaning of 'vocational' in this context. They see the key feature of a vocational course as the development of specific knowledge and skills directed towards employment in a particular range of currently available jobs and careers (*"definable technical skills"*, *"students get jobs in the media"*, *"produce students who can work in the industry"*, *"have a skill (high tone) that enables you to do a job. Usually (...) practical I think"*). For some participants (Participants 01, 02 and 12), vocational has a slightly broader application with *vocational* seen as synonymous with *professional* (*"whether it's vocational or professional for me it's the same thing"*, Participant 12 and *"so there is a high level of professionalism in this"*, Participant 01) and not being limited to such a narrow range of jobs and careers (*"they're not always vocational for that single vocation"*, Participant 01). These three participants are all based in teaching and learning support units or an academic registry rather than directly in academic departments offering media studies courses and so this may give rise to their slightly broader perspective. For Participant 07, *vocational* has an implication for teaching and learning (*"they learn by doing and reflecting on it rather than reading and studying theoretical texts"*) with this theme echoed by Participant 12 (*"it is where you physically go out into the real world and actually look at how you apply that theory"*). For these participants, *vocational* relates to practical work and the application of theoretical concepts.

Progressing beyond a definition of the term, participants also gave an indication of the value they put on the term 'vocational', either directly or by implication:

Value

I don't like the word, 'vocation.' [laughter] (Participant 02)

Okay. The V-word. (Participant 09)

The notion of vocational education seems to imply, an emphasis on training rather than on learning and education, and I don't think that's what we're about. (Participant 02)

That's a tricky one. I would [.....], well, that all depends really. I mean, when you say, you can almost say yes and no. (Participant 03)

What I'm working around to arguing against, is there is something specifically vocational about Media Studies as opposed to a lot of the other stuff that universities do? (Participant 04)

I mean my honest answer there would be going against everything that universities are driving to in recent years ... is, is, I would almost hope that they weren't vocational. (Participant 10)

Vocational is a dirty word [laughter] (Participant 11)

Because I think vocational has a lot of connotations, deliberately so, that have been heaped upon it, particularly in the last year and a half or two years, under the (...), you know, particular regime we are, where you are seeing a definite two countries approach to education and they don't need education, they need vocational training, whereas these lot need education and training the brain. (Participant 11)

It's not a term (confused) which we would use or associate our degree with. (...) We do incorporate some teaching of vo- what could be considered vocational skills as part of the degree (...) urm but it's not something we would (...) promote in literature (confused). (Participant 15)

But I think, I think, I think vocational in public discourse has a real negative association with it, because a vocational programme, it's seen as kind of, you know, secondary, it doesn't, it's not quite as, I don't know, good, in some ways as an academic degree, but actually I think, I think it's possible for the two things, you know, to have a vocational component to an academic degree and for that to be a really good thing. (Participant 16)

It's... It's not a word I ever use. And so far as I know, theology is the only vocational [laughs] thing you can study at university. I...I... No, I don't... I don't like the word 'vocational'. (Participant 18)

I think vocational is a useful term. It's... I think universities are frightened, because they don't know whether the media courses that they offer should be vocational. You know, the question they ask is "so, what's the difference between us and a training college?" My answer is "none". (Participant 19)

The convergence of responses in relation to a definition of *vocational* is matched by generally negative perceptions of the term and its implications for media studies and the media industries (*"I don't like the word"*, *"I don't think that's what we're about"*, *"I would almost hope that they weren't vocational"*, *"Vocational is a dirty word"*, *"It's not a term (confused) which we would use or associate our degree with"*).

Participant 02, the head of a central teaching and learning support unit, associates the term with '*training*' (which he feels universities should not be doing) and distinguishes that from '*education*' (which he feels they should). Participant 10, a media academic, actively views *vocational* as a negative attribute of media studies courses but feels that this view is somewhat subversive and not consistent with mainstream thinking (*"I mean my honest answer there would be going against everything that universities are driving to in recent years"*).

Participant 11, sees the term in overtly political terms and relates the term to his perceptions of the Coalition government elected in 2010 (*“where you are seeing a definite two countries approach to education and they don’t need education, they need vocational training, whereas these lot need education and training the brain”*). This view sees the political, social and cultural implications of vocational higher education as divisive and elitist and needs to be considered alongside the views of Participant 15, a course leader in a Russell Group affiliated university. Her response shows that although she recognises some elements of her course as vocational (*“we do incorporate some teaching of vo- what could be considered vocational skills as part of the degree”*), she doesn’t want her course to be viewed in this way. The response is quite informative. She begins to say *“we do incorporate some teaching of vo-“* but pauses and qualifies the response by saying *“what could be considered vocational”*, adding further distance between herself and the term *vocational*. She then indicates that these attributes would not be mentioned in public descriptions of the course, very clearly distancing the course and university from the term (*“but it's not something we would (...) promote in literature”*). The response from Participant 15 may be indicative of the negative connotations of the word *vocational* that Participant 11 identified.

The negative associations of the term *vocational* can be seen in headlines such as *“Pole dancing instruction among 5,000 vocational qualifications to lose funding”* (The Guardian, 5 March 2014) and *“Courses in self-tanning and balloon artistry 'to be axed’”* (The Daily Telegraph, 5 March 2014). These headlines followed from the release of the report *“Getting the Job Done: The Government’s Reform Plan for Vocational Qualifications”* by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills

(BIS, 2014) and highlights the ways in which vocational qualifications (albeit at age 16-19 level in this example) are associated with practical skills with little intellectual underpinning. It is a background of this portrayal of vocational qualifications that may lie behind the perceptions of vocational courses in relation to media studies in higher education.

This ambivalence around the term '*vocational*' is also perceptible in employer behaviours. The suggestion that higher education should deliver '*what employers want*' is complicated because they may not know what they want:

“On the one hand employers indicate a preference for those with vocational HE qualifications (eg HND) since, in the employers' words, individuals with such qualifications tend to have better technical and practical skills, are less theoretical in their approach to work tasks, and can 'hit the ground running'; on the other hand they continue to prefer to recruit graduates, particularly in areas of industry, or aspects of the business where a greater business awareness, a broader perspective and personal skills are required in addition to technical skills.” (ibid.)

Summary and Conclusions

The participant responses here show some consistency with the public discourses. '*Vocational*' is a term that is part of a discourse that has migrated over time from specific narrow associations that the participants mention (theology, law, teaching) to become associated with training for what are portrayed as low-skill occupations. The term has been devalued within both public and academic discourses, at least in regard to media studies. The oppositional discursive practices used by academic staff to mitigate the impact of the '*vocational*' are discussed next, in Section 5-5.

5-5 Employability: “A Weasel Word”

Introduction

Having explored the term ‘*vocational*’ the participants were prompted to give their views on the term ‘*employability*’ as a means of surfacing any discursive tensions between the two terms. Asking participants to distinguish between these words in terms of their understanding and usefulness encouraged them to bring further clarity to their rationale for media studies and provided responses that can be compared with the academic and public discourses of media studies and higher education. The outcome was that *employability* is regarded by participants as related to *vocational* but with some distinct differences in interpretation, acceptance and validity in relation to media studies.

In their report *Pedagogy for Employability* (Pegg, 2012), the *Higher Education Academy* cite two definitions for employability:

“A set of achievements – skills, understandings and personal attributes – that makes graduates more likely to gain employment and be successful in their chosen occupations, which benefits themselves, the workforce, the community and the economy.” (Yorke, 2006, p.8)

and

“Employability is not just about getting a job. Conversely, just because a student is on a vocational course does not mean that somehow employability is automatic. Employability is more than about developing attributes, techniques or experience just to enable a student to get a job, or to progress within a current career. It is about learning and the emphasis is less on ‘employ’ and more on ‘ability’. In essence, the emphasis is on developing critical, reflective abilities, with a view to empowering and enhancing the learner.” (Harvey, 2003, p.3)

These two definitions capture the essence of the debate and this is reflected in the responses of the participants. Whilst there was a consensus that employability is an outcome of learning that results in the learner improving their

prospects of securing employment and successfully managing their career, there were differing views on what constitutes the most important features of learning for employability. Some, as suggested by the Yorke definition above, see learning for employability as the acquisition of skills, knowledge and attributes that are immediately and directly related to those required for both generic graduate-level employment and employment in specific industries relating to the degree subject. Sometimes referred to as 'hard skills' in order to distinguish them from 'soft skills' and 'emotional intelligence' (Hurrell et al., 2012), these can include areas such technical and practical skills, written and oral communication and presentation skills, time management, team working and project management skills. This view of employability then begins to overlap with the usage of the term '*vocational*'. Alternatively, others see employability as being derived from the development of academic and intellectual skills and attributes that lead to critical and analytical approaches to problem solving, enabling a graduate to make a deeper contribution to professional practice as well as developing '*critical citizenship*' (Johnson and Morris, 2010) and general personal development. Responses from eight of the participants contribute to this analysis.

Analysis

This first set of responses covers the participants' views on the relationship between the two terms, '*vocational*' and '*employability*', together with their definition:

See, for me, vocational and employability are not very dissimilar words. (Participant 19)

Well, it is different, isn't it? Because you can be vocationally trained and unemployable. (Participant 04)

No, it is my life. It is what I do. [Laughs]. I make films; I think about films; I teach films, and that's what I do. So you know, in that sense, it's a vocation for me. (Participant 19)

...that comes out of the theoretical side of the course in as much as it's sociology and political economy, but it's practical. It's employability: it's not vocational as such, I would have thought (Participant 04)

I try to say this to students we are trying to say to them, you know, the employability agenda is very important, but it will come if you are passionate about it. And... and that's what you've got to do, be passionate and follow your dream. (Participant 19)

The ambiguity in the usage of the terms 'vocational' and 'employability' and the relationship between them is illustrated by the responses of Participants 04 and 19. Both these participants are experienced members of academic staff teaching and researching media. Participant 04 has had an extensive academic career in a number of universities whilst Participant 19 had a career in the media industries before becoming a university lecturer.

Participant 19 sees employability as arising from a passion for the life style of a film maker (*"it is my life. It is what I do"* and *"be passionate and follow your dream"*) and sees that passion as defining a 'vocatio'n as a film maker. This contrasts with the approach of Participant 04 who draws a distinction between what he sees as 'vocational' training, an attribute of a course and 'employability', an attribute of a graduate (*"you can be vocationally trained and unemployable"*). Further to this, Participant 04 sees graduate employability as being promoted by the more theoretical aspects of media studies (*"comes out of the theoretical side of the course in as much as it's sociology and political economy"*) rather than making a link between 'employability' and the practice-based elements of a course. This is a

contrast with some of the institutional promotional material considered within Chapter Seven, Section 7-2 where practice-based skills with media industry relevance are cited as a key element of employability.

For other participants, *employability* does imply a specific skill set:

...in employability terms, thinking widely about employability, then the key things are basically how well can students communicate?
(Participant 02)

So employability, you're going in to do a degree, you're gaining the knowledge and the practical, skills in order to be employed within the roles that [...] for instance, a film company has or a media company has or you go and work for an animation company. And that's what employability means. (Participant 03)

Employability is to me it has got (...) various nuances. (...)
Employability (...) means that you have developed certain skills (...) that (...) you can operate in a world out there. (Participant 12)

None of these participants are media studies academic staff. Participant 02 is responsible for teaching and learning at an institutional level, Participant 03 is a media graduate and Participant 12 is a senior member of an academic registry with a background in quality assurance. For these participants, their perception of 'employability' does conform to the Yorke definition with the media graduate (*"practical, skills in order to be employed within the roles"*, Participant 03) being quite specific about the need for practical, industry-relevant skills as an essential part of 'employability'. Whilst Participant 12 does not have a teaching or industry background in the media, she does imply a similar view but in a more general way (*"you have developed certain skills (...) that (...) you can operate in a world out there"*). This theme of skills for *"a world out there"* is echoed by Participant 06 (*"it's that reality of what exists out there", "the reality of the industry"*). This

participant is a course leader working within a department with an art school approach and she sees courses that are “*just purely academic*” as delivering less employability.

What’s interesting is, I think from our delivery of our course because of the industry experience that employability is almost built in to how we deliver the modules, it’s that reality of what exists out there. So I do feel that courses that maybe are just purely academic driven with and maybe delivered without that experience built in, doesn’t necessarily benefit the students in terms of the reality of the industry.
(Participant 06)

Participant 08 is also working within a department that identifies itself with an art school approach but has a more nuanced position because, as part of her role as the head of a media department, she is also participating in the development of an institution-wide corporate approach to employability:

...but particularly looking at soft skills actually, and not at hard skills. But then that’s my bias and I have consciously been articulating that bias at the employability group. But it’s fallen on very open ears.
(Participant 08)

This participant prioritises ‘*soft skills*’ over ‘*hard skills*’. Here ‘*soft skills*’ implies generic inter-personal and communication skills as distinct from the ability to perform specific job-related tasks within a specific industry context, ‘*hard skills*’. The participant goes on to elaborate on how this operates institutionally. However, the description is of something remarkably insubstantial (“*it’s very, it’s very light touch*”, “*a narrative that can be gleaned from the syllabus*”, “*we always will avoid, anything that is remotely box ticking-ish*”):

It’s very, it’s very light touch but, you know, we have a thing, you know, the employability agenda, there needs to be a narrative that can be gleaned from the syllabus that proves to the institution that

certain things are happening. But we expect them to be fully embedded in the learning. So, and we definitely have avoided, and I think we always will avoid, anything that is remotely box ticking-ish.
(Participant 08)

This seems quite defensive with the unprompted implication that the institutional employability initiative is not particularly onerous (*“light touch”*) nor a perfunctory and pointless exercise (*“avoid, anything that is remotely box ticking-ish”*) and may relate to the possibly difficult dual role of being both an academic head of department and a member of a corporate leadership team, requiring a context-sensitive switch between discourses.

Other participants take a broader view of employability without a direct reference to any specific skills:

I think the person has to make themselves [laughter] employable and they will do that by understanding the culture of what it is they're studying, by understanding the culture of the area, industry, profession into which they want to go and by their own motivation.
(Participant 01)

Participant 01 sees employability as an attribute that students actively acquire themselves rather than being something they passively receive as an outcome of studying a course. Rather than being a specific set of skills, this participant sees employability as cultural awareness within a particular academic and industry context. Participant 04 also sees employability in more generic terms with an emphasis on active student acquisition (*“has as much to do with the student's response to the learning experience as it does to the content of that experience”*). He also sees employability as more than *‘hard skills’* acquisition due to the limited lifetime (*“going to be redundant fairly early on in their careers”*) of any specific

technology-based skills. Participant 19 relates ‘*employability*’ to the more general term ‘*professionalism*’ which is seen as a combination of skills and attributes:

In a sense, technology moves fast enough that you’re often training people in skills that are going to be redundant fairly early on in their careers, and there are newly emergent skills that are only crystallising during their course (...) so employability I would have thought has as much to do with the student’s response to the learning experience as it does to the content of that experience because it’s about students registering that for themselves. (Participant 04)

And employability is a noun, and... and professionalism is a key aspect, which leads towards employability. Professionalism is...is a range of skills, employability is the aims and attributes, and employability is what those attributes and skills are aimed towards. (Participant 19)

Summary and Conclusions

In summary, the participant responses are part of a discourse of ‘*employability*’ that is closer to that of Harvey (2003) with an emphasis on broader graduate attributes that go beyond narrow industry-specific skills. Participant 17 provides a useful, summarising insight into a media academic discourse of ‘*employability*’. His conception of ‘*employability*’ combines both specific skills (“...*somebody* (...) *that can write, communicate...*”) with the broader attribute of being able to “*think critically*”:

...Whereas (...) to be... employability, I, I think (...) does, you know, weasel word or not (...), it’s quite a good word. Because I think, i-it does imply (...) this is somebody (...) that can write, communicate, (...) think critically, all the things urm (....) an undergraduate degree ought to be doing anyway. (Participant 17)

But significantly, he sees *employability* as a *weasel word* (“*a word used in order to evade or retreat from a direct or forthright statement or position*”, (Merriam-Webster

online dictionary)). *Employability* can be seen as a more acceptable term for use by academic staff as it allows greater ambiguity in meaning; it allows engagement with a discourse that sees higher education as directed primarily towards employment and the economic implications of that whilst still being part of a discourse that looks beyond employment to broader personal development and societal benefits of higher education. Within this discourse, employment and career development are outcomes that follow, amongst others, from well-educated, well-informed and critically-aware citizenship.

“This is a way to rethink that New Labour weasel word ‘employability’. Students from FE and the new (new) universities have to convince remaining employers that, while their abstract ‘book knowledge’ may not be expressed with the literary elegance of the ‘Cambridge model essay’, their practical all-round experience has given them the ‘nouse’ to put that theory into practice.” (Ainley and Allen, 2010, p.148)

This positioning of media academic staff at the loci of two oppositional discourses demonstrates how power in media studies is brokered through academic professional practices; the term is assimilated from the public into the academic discourse but appropriated to fit academic ‘ways of thinking’.

5-6 Media Industries: “These are the skills that we require”

Introduction

This analysis considers the participant responses that relate to the media industries and their interaction with media studies. This theme builds on the question of a rationale for media studies (Chapter 5, Section 5-3) and is important as it allows a comparison between the public discourses of vocationalism and employability to be compared with academic discourses, providing some insight into the ways in which the participants manage those tensions and the ways they are played out in the interactions between higher education institutions and the media industries. Responses from five participants have been used as the basis for this analysis.

A key theme here is the extent to which media studies courses should equip students for specific, current media industry roles delivering specific media industry practices. This question is quickly accessed through a consideration of an element of the public policy discourse; the use of the term ‘*employer*’, a term that can be seen as privileging the graduate careers that do follow this pattern and is perhaps reminiscent of a time when higher education participation rates were significantly lower and the ‘milkround’ was still a common practice for bringing together relatively small numbers of graduating students and ‘blue chip’ graduate employers (Branine, 2008).

The term employer is still widely used across government and higher education reports and policies (for example, Lowden *et al.* (2011) and Little *et al.* (2003)) but can be, in the case of media studies graduates, a misnomer as it carries the

discursive implication of an employer/employee relationship and a conventional graduate career path that offers stability and progression. This is not the typical pattern of employment in the creative industries:

“Graduates working in creative occupations holding a degree from a Russell group university actually increase their chances of being self-employed or being in a part-time or voluntary/unpaid job. This highlights that the creative sector is structurally different than the rest of the economy – with more project- based work and part-time freelance opportunities – and even graduates from the most prestigious HEIs have these kind of jobs (often holding more than one job).” (Faggian *et al.*, 2013, p.196)

The work of Faggian *et al.* shows that not only is voluntary/unpaid, part-time, short-term, contracting and freelance employment a dominant feature of the creative industries but it also appears to be an acceptable and sustainable model of working as it is more prevalent amongst graduates from highly selective Russell Group universities who are assumed to have a broader range of post-graduation opportunities.

This disconnect between the conventional discourse of graduate employment and the creative industries when combined with the existential concerns of media studies leads to a set of participant responses that provide some further insight into the social practices that constitute the interactions between the academy and industry, for media studies.

Analysis

Participant 01 has had an extensive career as a broadcast journalist and has then become a university lecturer relatively recently. She points to media courses as partially meeting the training needs of the industry following cost-cutting and a move away from conventional career patterns towards a casualisation of labour.

You have the media courses which are effectively taking the place, and improving upon actually, in many cases, the industry training that is no longer being delivered. In journalism, people used to be trained on newspapers; they used to be trained in house; there were apprenticeships, indentures: those are very rare now because the companies say they cannot afford to run them. So effectively, that has to be delivered somewhere else. Sometimes that's delivered in FE, as opposed to HE, erm, but by delivering it at HE, I think there is a broader product that's delivered and I think the students benefit far more from it as long as they are getting a level of experience built into it so there is a reality to what they're doing. (Participant 01)

A transition from specific industry-based training to a broader provision involving the accreditation of courses delivered by the further and higher education sectors has been documented by the National Council for the Training of Journalists (2014) and Broadcast Journalism Training Council (2014) for the journalism segment of the industry and by Creative Skillset (2014) for other segments of the creative industries.

Participant 15 focuses on the tension in satisfying the requirements of the professional accrediting body (Broadcast Journalism Training Council - BJTC) within the context of a confident, autonomous, research-intensive department in a Russell Group university. The implications of her response (below) are that she sees her institution as distinctive from the mainstream of institutions offering BJTC accredited courses (*"being in a Russell Group university... ..because of the breadth of different institutions which they accredit"*). She also accesses the discourse of an 'education/training' dichotomy when highlighting the difficulties applying accreditation requirements to both undergraduate and postgraduate courses which further highlights her distancing from industry accreditation; training as a journalist is not education.

There is a tension (...) between (...) being in a Russell Group university and, and the BJTC guidelines because of the breadth of different institutions which they accredit. And they're trying to apply the same set of guidelines to those as they are to us, so (...) they try to apply the same guidelines to postgraduate (...) c- one year course where you might expect to be (...) trained (...) basically as a journalist rather than educated. (Participant 15)

Media graduate, Participant 14, is also critical of one of the other major professional accreditation bodies, *Creative Skillset*:

I don't like Skillset (angry) (...)because of my opinion of, you know, of the balance of (...) of a theoretical and contextual [slight laugh] underpinning to practical work and this is none of that. (...) You know, it is (...) what do we need? [sigh] We need camera operators, w- well we'll have courses for camera operators. (...) And then next week it's something else. (Participant 14)

His concerns are again focussed on the tensions of the 'education/training' discourse, seeing the industry body as focussing too much on short-term practical skills at the expense of the "theoretical" and "contextual". However the senior academic, Participant 04, does not see the two approaches as mutually exclusive and does not see a problem in also equipping students with industry-relevant skills although he sees these as quite broad and transferable across the media industries:

On the other hand, we are clearly dealing with a set of technologies that do specifically equip students with skills which are transferable skills in the context of the media industry and it would be silly to [sighs] ignore that entirely. (Participant 04)

Having recently completed the design of a revised journalism course, Participant 01 has formed some clear views on the relationship between the academy and industry:

Well, perhaps HE should be teaching industry as much as industry should be teaching HE. So it should be a better collaboration, much

more effective on both parts and I think sometimes industry has an odd view of what HE is and HE has a very dismissive view of what industry is. And I think the two of them have got to bang their heads together, get together and just collaborate, which they don't do properly at all. (Participant 01)

She has a negative view of the current state of the collaboration between the two and laments the lack of communication. She goes on to be particularly disparaging of the role of employers in the formal course development and approval process, seeing it as purely tokenistic:

...the token employer who is being wheeled out has probably never even spoken to the academic. Erm, and to me that's just farcical and that doesn't do any good for anybody's reputation. (Participant 01)

The time-limited currency of industry-specific skills is highlighted by Participant 04. This is pitched as a reason for being wary of employer's short-term demands that are focused on meeting immediate skills gaps.

I also say, "Look, students, if you come here, in four or five years time, you'll be applying for jobs that don't exist at the moment". (Participant 04)

He illustrates this by pointing to the apparently paradoxical growth in journalism courses and student numbers at a time when the conventional journalism industry is perceived to be in decline:

But of course, there are gaps between what's going on in the media world and people's thoughts. I mean, look at the way that journalism has been expanding at exactly the period when everybody is talking about print dying, [laughter] and papers all over the world are massively cutting back on staff. (Participant 04)

Participant 05 (media graduate and researcher at Channel 4) provides the most student-relevant contribution to the realities of studying the media and then

graduating to a career in the media industries. His first contribution is to apologetically suggest that as media production companies will not employ production crew until they are at least twenty-one for car driving and insurance reasons, the rationale for studying an undergraduate media degree is that it is the best way of occupying the time between eighteen and twenty-one:

A lot of production firms won't hire someone until they're twenty-one because of their driving [laughter]. So it helped me pass the time until I was twenty-one! [laughter]. No that's horrible, that's horrible. That's totally mean. (Participant 05)

He then goes on to give an account of the process of applying for internships and being under-prepared in terms of the nature of industry roles:

I felt that I was a bit clueless, and I remember applying for like a production management internship, and I got through to the last round which I was really happy about, out of hundreds of people. And they told me about the job, and I was like... and I remember I must've just sort of given it away [laughter], this is not what I want, and I must've just given it away at the interview [laughter]. (Participant 05)

This then leads to a stark portrait of the realities of the media industries for new graduates and points to the lack of appropriate preparation within the course (or extra-curricular):

It's very easy for a lot of young people to be exploited when they go in, like you sort of see sometimes people expected to do like a fourteen hour day, or fifteen hours, and that's on less than minimum wage, I think that that's just something else, maybe just a seminar or something, about not being exploited, but that's something that could be quite useful. (Participant 05)

This concern returns the narrative to discussion of a rationale for media studies. A study of the media may have moved on from Leavis (1933) and an 'inoculation' against 'bad' culture to an inoculation against 'bad' employment practices;

exploitation. This can form a rationale for the consideration of the political economy of the media industries on the basis that an understanding of media industry practices enables a graduate to detect and try to avoid exploitation after graduation.

Summary and Conclusions

Hesmondhalgh (2014) has analysed the relationship between media industries research and education and draws a distinction between ‘*administrative*’ and ‘*critical*’ communications research that is useful as an over-arching analysis of the participant responses here. Hesmondhalgh characterises ‘*administrative*’ research as normally taking place outside universities and being:

“futurological, predicting trends and providing perspectives that might inform the strategy of firms. It is often commissioned or bought by media companies from hundreds of marketing and forecasting firms. And it is usually extremely expensive and closed to public access.” (ibid. p.22)

He then contrasts this with ‘*critical*’ media industry research:

“of concentration and conglomeration, of international inequality, of poor and unequal labor conditions, of organizational dynamics that lead to content that fails adequately to provide public knowledge or rich aesthetic experiences.” (ibid.)

Hesmondhalgh attributes this distinction to Lazarsfeld and points to its value in a consideration of the relationship between the media industries and media education:

“Generations of media educators, who have understandably wanted their students to be questioning rather than compliant subjects, used the distinction as a means to explain the value of critique.” (ibid.)

This highlighting of critical research matches the discourses evidenced by the participants. The media academics placed considerable value on collaboration with the media industries but prioritise the maintenance of a critical distance and see collaboration as two-way. They portray the delivery of a specific set of skills imposed by accrediting bodies as potentially adding superficial competitive advantage in student recruitment but at a cost to the academic integrity of the course that may not be worth paying. The responses of the media graduate, Participant 05, shows some of the ways in which media studies can engage with the industry but retain some critical distance.

These discursive practices can be seen as oppositional discourses in tension with discourse deployed by the media industries and the media academy aimed at '*getting things done*' their way. Whilst these media academics wish to extend collaborative working with the media industries, that want it to be a peer-to-peer relationship rather than provider/consumer.

5-7 Transferable Skills: “Killed Bin Laden”

Introduction

Participant 17: I think this is not apocryphal that the [slight laugh]...

Interviewer: [slight laugh]

Participant 17: ...that the [slight laugh] head of the Seal Hit Squad that killed...

Interviewer: Oh yeah [slight laugh] oh yes. [slight laugh]

Participant 17: ...[slight laugh] killed Bin Laden was actually a journalism graduate from the University of Texas, I think that's right?

This graphic example of transferable skills in media studies has a basis in fact and was widely reported in the press as part of the coverage of the US operation to kill Osama Bin Laden in May 2011 (For example, BBC, 2011; Huffington Post, 2011). The participant has conflated Vice Admiral William H McRaven, head of the Joint Special Operations Command in Afghanistan, the overall commander of the operation and journalism graduate with the Navy SEAL unit that actually carried out the killing but the participant successfully portrays the importance of transferable skills as a characterising element of media studies courses.

Writing in 1993, shortly after the binary divide between universities and polytechnics was abolished and before a period of expansion in the provision of media studies courses, Bridges, writing from a philosophical perspective, defined transferable skills:

“The term *transferable skills* tends to be preferred when people are talking about the application of skills across different social contexts. Skills in interpersonal communication, management skills and collaborative group working skills are all perhaps examples of this kind.” (Bridges, 1993, p.45)

This definition significantly demonstrates the evolution of higher education discourse over the time since Bridges was writing. For Bridges, the *transfer* part of *transferable skills* is “*across different social contexts*”. This contrasts with the meaning that can be inferred from the participants’ responses. They now see the *transfer* in *transferable skills* as *across different employment contexts*.

The discourse around ‘*skills*’ for ‘*employability*’ in higher education is characterised by a desire to highlight this aspect of learning as distinct and different from the conventional expectations of a graduate. In their report on the *Case Studies for Advanced Skills and Employability in Higher Education* project, Holmes and Miller (2000, p.655) give a rationale for the project:

“A degree is no longer enough to guarantee employment. Employers are now looking for additional ingredients, which demonstrate that the graduate has not only acquired academic capabilities, but also developed the key skills that will enable a successful and expeditious transition from education into employment.”

This fragment of discourse from the secondary literature contains a number of elements that associate it with a discourse of a dominant ‘*out there in the real world*’ (see Chapter 6, Section 6-7). This is indicated by the assumption that “academic capabilities” cannot expedite a “*transition from education to employment*” and that it is possible for a graduate to possess a degree qualification but not be employable, implying that whatever attributes possession of a degree-level qualification denote, they are not what is required; something is missing. Holmes and Miller (ibid., p.654) illustrate the specific skills concerned by drawing on a key skills initiative at the University of Northumbria that includes; “*managing and applying intellect; self-management; working with others; effective communication; information technology and, use and application of mathematics*”.

This discourse leads to a plethora of institutional initiatives, frameworks and programmes that develop ‘key skills’, ‘transferable skills’, ‘skills for employability’ etc. that can then encounter oppositional discourses. This section of analysis considers the responses from five of the participants in relation to these discourses.

Analysis

Participant 01 is an experienced broadcast journalist and university lecturer, now working within a central teaching and learning directorate.

The other part of it is that a lot of the people who go into media courses are not going to go into the media, [...] and as such, it’s about developing the individual, developing the individual’s knowledge, understanding within an area and they are really transferable skills. And I think that’s one of the key things that any media course; the media courses are delivering hugely transferable skills because of one of their main emphases is the communication skills and every single person in whatever job they have, has to have communication skills if they’re going to be able to articulate what they want to do and all the rest of it. (Participant 01)

Recognising that many media graduates do not enter the media industries, Participant 01 readily uses the term ‘transferable skills’ but it is clear that she sees these skills as much more than the generic key skills identified by Northumbria. This participant points much more towards the value of a media degree course as a means of personal, intellectual development and the overriding importance of communication skills. It is also worth noting the principal reason that the participant gives for the importance of communication skills; “to be able to articulate what they want to do”. This is not part of a ‘real world’, ‘what employers

want' discourse but is better associated with 'empowerment' and 'personal and intellectual development'. This position is confirmed in her next response:

They've learnt to be much more critical, to develop their own persona, their own identities so actually, (...) it has enhanced them as individuals and made them employable for the area that they've then decided, 'Actually, that's where I want to go.' (Participant 01)

Participant 07 and Participant 08 both refer to the term '*transferable skills*'.

Participant 07 sees negative associations with the term whilst Participant 08 recognises their role but again refers to personal development ("*confidence-building*") rather than instrumental workplace skills.

I think it does 'cause there- a-another bad word that's being used is transferable skills and I think they, quite a lot of transferable skills that can be applied to whatever they're going to do in the future. (Participant 07)

And you do have to understand what a CV might mean for different scenarios but actually you know, confidence-building, communication, all those things, and I know you know, the classic transferable skills things. (Participant 08)

Participant 14 disassociates himself from the term by classing it as a "*buzz word*" and goes on to present a slippery-slope argument that sees transferable skills as a route to '*vocational*' technical training, something that would be impossible to deliver well because of resource constraints.

Has skills which are (...) 'transferable' as the, you know, as the- one of the buzz words is (...) but I think it's important that (...) we- universities and colleges don't present themselves as being vocational too specifically because how, you know, how can you (...) unless you've got the same equipment that every single company's got (...) you can't... (Participant 14)

"Teaching people to do a- to do a skill for which there is (...) palpably less call than there was?" (...) If cornered like that I often hear myself (...) replying with the transferability of journalism. (Participant 17)

Participant 17 is more positive if somewhat reluctant. He is speaking specifically about journalism and the perception that, because of technological and economic changes, traditional journalism roles that are often the career goal of journalism students are in decline. This leads him to ambivalently (“*if cornered*”) turn to transferable skills as a rationale for a course that now does not lead to a recognised career path.

Participant 18 expands on the idea that media studies courses naturally develop good communication skills by referring to this as “*telling stories*”, an over-arching appreciation of narrative. He sees this as “*key*” and more significant than technical skills. He then goes on to forcefully assert the significance of these generic skills that go beyond the requirement of any single employment context.

And, in order to teach people how to communicate, and communicating is pretty much telling stories in order to give people that absolutely key, transferable skill, it’s not just the technical skills, it’s all of the context behind it. (Participant 18)

I think it’s morally reprehensible to say “we are training you for this one job, and we’re not giving you that empowering professional flexibility, those kind of transferable skills” (Participant 18)

Summary and Conclusions

This set of participant responses illustrate the delicate balance that academic staff maintain at the intersection of public and institutional policy discourses and academic discourses. These responses show that the participants readily use the term ‘*transferable skills*’ and its variants but they have appropriated them within their own local, academic discourses and ascribe it a usage at odds with public

policy usage. This enables them to apparently support and promote the notion while maintaining an ideologically distinct stance in their professional practices.

As the responses throughout this Discourses of Identity chapter have shown, individual academic identity and collective subject identity are challenged by public discourses around the nature and purpose of higher education in general with specific challenges for media academic and media studies. In response to these challenges, the participants demonstrate the use of oppositional, balancing discursive practices that counter what could be seen (Williams, 2012a) as hegemonic neo-liberal ideation.

Chapter Six

Data Analysis – Media Studies - Discourses of Academic Practice

6-1 Introduction

Chapter Six brings together the data analyses related to the ways the participants spoke about the practices of media studies within the context of higher education institutions, discourses of ‘academic practice’ (Becher and Trowler, 2001). This provides some insight into how ‘*things get done*’ and the ways generic higher education practices are instantiated within a ‘*media studies*’ context. The analyses in this chapter primarily address research questions one and two (see Chapter One, Section 1-7).

This chapter moves beyond the ways the participants perceive their professional identities and role and purpose of ‘*media studies*’ and looks at how these discourses interact with some of the discursive practices that constitute an institution of higher education. Institutional practices such as ‘*quality assurance*’, ‘*course design*’ and ‘*assessment*’ are considered alongside the practice implications of the perennial ‘*theory/practice*’ dichotomy in ‘*media studies*’ and a discourse of ‘*out there in the real world*’. There is also an analysis of participants’ perceptions of collegiate practices in relation to a discourse of ‘*new managerialism*’ (Collini,

2012) together with a consideration of the ways academic discursive practices vary across the English higher education sector.

Responses from all participants have been included in the analyses in this chapter.

Whilst media studies academic staff provide the bulk of the responses, useful additional insight was gained by including the perceptions of central university professional staff, media studies graduates and the secondary school headteacher.

6-2 Course Design: “How do you decide what you chuck out?”

Introduction

This section considers the impact of higher education discourses on the course design process in media studies, a significant aspect of professional practice for media academics. Distinctively within higher education, the academic staff involved in the provision of a course are often also the designers of both the course structure and its content, albeit working within formal processes and procedures that provide structural constraints. This direct relationship between the teaching staff and the course design provides an opportunity for a consideration of the ways the discourses around media studies and higher education are played out through media studies courses.

The course design process is generally a collective, collegiate process through which a group of academic staff agree a rationale for the course and then define it in terms of course learning outcomes and overall teaching, learning and assessment strategies. The course is then sub-divided into learning units or modules of defined credit rating and level and these units are then designed by one or two individuals, each with its own aims, objectives, learning outcomes, teaching schedule, assessment strategy and criteria and learning materials (Prosser and Trigwell, 2001). Course teams will normally be working within a framework of institutionally prescribed course design requirements intended to ensure that the course interfaces with the institutions' delivery systems and that it also fulfils the requirements and expectations of external agencies such as the Quality Assurance Agency and any appropriate Professional, Statutory or

Regulating Bodies (PSRB). The decision to design a new course or review and revise an existing course is often a result of strategic considerations at an institutional, faculty or departmental level.

Lea (2007) stresses the importance of a consideration of student discursive practices and their relationship to academic discourses as a key to successful course design. If student/academic oppositional discourses are set up through course structures, content, teaching and learning then, whatever the academic staff see as the rationale for media studies, those outcomes are unlikely to be realised. These participant responses (three participants) demonstrate the relationships between the discourses of media studies and the processes of course design.

Analysis

The response from Participant 01 (below) illustrates a dilemma for a course designer as a result of the discourses of '*out there in the real world*' and '*what employers want*'. Her concern is bridging the gaps between the differing expectations of the media industries and the associated PSRBs and research-informed academic concerns. Employer concerns are seen as short-sighted and focussed on filling immediate needs rather than equipping students for a long-term career in a rapidly changing industry:

It needed to not only look at what the industry needed tomorrow but it needed to look at what the industry didn't always know that it was going to need in the future. I went to accreditation bodies, so I looked at those bodies that were accrediting within the field and equally then applied what I'd just learnt and thought, 'Oh, there are shortcomings here. Now what do I do?' So that then led me first of all thinking, 'Hmm, they're only looking to tomorrow and I think they should be looking a bit to the future because if I develop a course and it's not actually going to start until next year then it could already be out of date by the time it gets in and, 'Oh hell!' So that was part of the panic. (Participant 01)

Richmond and Sanders (2014, p.12) characterise the employer focus on immediacy and short-term skills as a “*discourse of deficit*” and, as such, there is little agreement amongst employers as to what is missing, making the process of course design with employer/accreditation body approval as a requirement quite problematic.

I had to decide what length of credits I needed within a unit. That was a bit alarming! Erm, [...] so given that framework, I then set about trying to work out what it was we needed to; the first thing was what do we need to cover? What do we need in here? Have we got things that we're already doing that would work, to be developed? Do we have the expertise in-house already? That was another point, or can we call on it? How would we staff it? (Participant 01)

Participant 01 then goes on to discuss the process of course design in relation to the practicalities of fitting content into institutional course structure requirements, re-purposing existing course elements and resource constraints, an aspect that is also mentioned, more starkly by Participant 02, a Director of Teaching and Learning at a post-92 university:

There is a danger that people will see lots of interesting things and then will build lots of those interesting things into their curriculum, and those interesting things may be valuable to the learning experience but when you add them all up, we can't really resource all of those sorts of interesting things because often, those interesting things have quite high resource requirements associated with them. (Participant 02)

Participant 04 also focuses on course design as a filtering and editing process and the balance of content against resources:

[Grunts]. Well, how do you decide what you chuck out? I mean, my experience of course design is that everybody throws in things that should be in and they all sound like good ideas, and then suddenly you've got your pint pot and you've got seven quarts of content. Er, and one of the challenges is (...) whether you try and do everything too quickly and cram everything in, or whether you eliminate things and if so, what? (Participant 04)

Participant 02's approach to this touches on the discourse of 'collegiality' (see Chapter 6, Section 6-6) to show how she resolved her content selection issues:

I was talking to people who were validating courses and saying, "What are you putting in yours?" (...) And people were very good and very open and shared. (Participant 01)

This implies that academic discursive practices underpin the course design process and so whilst a discourse of '*new managerialism*' may set the broad parameters for a new course ('*is there a market for it?*', '*where will the students get jobs?*'), the translation of those requirements into an approved course remains a collegiate academic process with a sharing of ideas between academic staff that are not particularly constrained by institutional boundaries, despite the discourse of '*new managerial*' institution-to-institution competition.

Summary and Conclusions

The process of media course design is crucial as a set of discursive practices that directly link the public and academic discourses of media studies with the students' learning experiences and graduate outcomes. However, a search of research literature reveals very little work on the specifics of course design; the selection of curriculum content and its integration into formal structures of learning. There is an extensive literature around higher education pedagogy; teaching, learning and assessment at a unit/module level across a range of subjects and disciplines but little on course design as curriculum selection (Tight, 2012), a common activity in media studies that concerns a number of the participants in this study. Media studies lacks the traditions and coherence of subjects that have reached a broad consensus regarding core curriculum content at undergraduate level and so it is to be expected that this will more of an issue for these participants. Much of the existing literature on course design covers the specifics of a particular aspect of course design (for example, designing in employability) or designing courses for a particular delivery mode (for example, designing online or distance-learning courses).

On this basis, it is suggested that this aspect of media studies could be the focus of future research work with the aim of understanding the ways in which academic practitioners select and structure subject content into an approved course of study. This could enhance professional practice and provide greater insight into the ways academic staff manage these oppositional discourses of 'collegiate' collaboration and 'new managerialism' competition within the course design process.

6-3 Quality Assurance: Aliens, Ghosts and Roundheads

Introduction

“A parallel can be found in the rivalries and relationships between academics and institutional agents – such as quality assurance and enhancement units, learning and teaching groups and committees, Faculty/School and institutional senior management teams. In the field of media studies, the relationships between stakeholders is particularly fraught and seeded with suspicion about various parties’ agendas for the future of media education, as is evident in the growing tension between media academics and external stakeholders...” (Kimber, 2013, p.238)

This section of the analysis considers the participant responses from university staff working in both academic media departments and centralised professional services and focuses on their perceptions of formal institutional processes for maintaining academic standards and developing the curriculum and associated teaching, learning and assessment – ‘*quality assurance and enhancement*’. This aspect of academic practice has been the subject of academic research studies, notably Morley’s (2003) work, published as the monograph *Quality and Power in Higher Education* that is “*an examination of the power relations that organize and facilitate quality assurance in higher education*” (ibid. p. vii). Morley observes that:

“Quality assurance involves making distinctions – classifying, segregating, drawing boundaries – dividing people and organisations into categories simultaneously united and separated by similarity and difference. ... Some people are authorized to speak authoritatively because others are silenced.” (Morley, 2003, p.69)

This rather bleak portrayal of the impact of quality assurance is certainly recognisable within the participant responses within this study but a detailed consideration of the transcripts reveals a more nuanced picture. This group (nine participants) hold rather ambivalent views of quality assurance and enhancement

as an aspect of their academic practice but reveal a recognition of the value of some principles of quality assurance together with a range of ‘coping strategies’.

Analysis

These perceptions can then be compared with the public discourse that portrays higher education institutions as changing, negatively, from ‘*collegiate*’ bodies of ‘*independent scholars*’ to ‘*managerial*’, ‘*hierarchical*’, overly ‘*bureaucratic*’, market-oriented service providers (Collini, 2012; Henkel, 2005; Boden and Epstein, 2011; Hoecht, 2006).

These participant responses demonstrate the interactions that occur around the formal approval, monitoring and enhancements of media courses, the ways staff position themselves in relation to these activities and their perceptions of the role and purpose of such formalities. To demonstrate the overall nature of these responses, these first examples alternate between, firstly broadly positive, and then broadly negative views:

They’re inspecting us again, you know, so I, I don’t know. I think it does have an impact. I mean, I’ve got colleagues that see it as a completely alien process and it’s kind of like, you know, there’s this, ethereal realm where ghosts move and then you’ve got to live in the real world and I don’t believe that per se, I’m much more of your, more of your roundhead opinion, I’m kind of like, you know, you know, you’ve got to apply the principles of quality, just kind of, I’m more of a Ken Livingstone than a Boris, if you know what I mean [laughter]. (Participant 11)

There is a level of bureaucracy (angry) (...) and (...) in some of that there is some (...) ticking of boxes such as when you’re doing your module review, (...) I have to, at the end of it say how that module contributes to a set of key characteristics which are taken from QAA benchmarks, are taken from the university strategy. (Participant 15)

Because actually students, people really, really care about students here. And you always, for me that's so helpful because I always return it to, you know, your assessment practices have to be good because of the, what the students feel about it, you know, and it's not fair to the student to do this rather than you must do it because it's right, you know, or 'cause it says so in the regulations or something. (Participant 08)

I'm kind of more of a person that's kind of, I'll do something until somebody tells me to stop, rather than finding out the rules first. (Participant 16)

If you weren't giving such guidelines you could very easily as a group of people (....) just concentrate on, on, on very individual items that maybe you are particularly good at and, and leave others out or let's say you know making life easy (happy) and say all I do is, is multiple choice tests. (Participant 12)

Yes there is, yes and, you have to sort of submit things to them and there's a panel that sits and they make a decision and they make recommendations and so yeah, it wouldn't just be, I couldn't say right, I think we need research methods, let's do it next year. It has to go through a whole set of form filling and bureaucratic hoops before that's possible. And I think actually, if you wanted to change a core component, you know, something that's compulsory on the degree, I think that has to go, it can't happen until the external validation, which happens again in three or five years. So you couldn't make any big structural changes. (Participant 16)

Participant 11, whilst acknowledging the necessity of the process (“*you’ve got to apply the principles of quality*”), provides a graphic description of a disconnection that he portrays as a world populated by aliens, ghosts, roundheads, Ken Livingstone and Boris Johnson. This theme is echoed by other participants and evokes a quality assurance paradigm of reports, forms, statistics, monitoring and action plans that some participants see as unhelpful in managing a media course on a day-to-day basis. Some of the participant responses go further and assert that quality assurance processes exert a negative influence on the ‘*real*’ quality and standards of their course by slowing the introduction of innovation and new ideas in curriculum, teaching, learning and assessment.

For a view of the ‘other side’ of this process, Participant 12, an Academic Registrar in a Post-92 University with responsibility for quality assurance operations expresses her frustrations with the response of academic staff to attempts to make the process quicker and easier:

“And you know it's all sort of bureaucracy and so forth. (...) And I- I constantly have people, if you give them (...) let's say templates (...) which you, you [slight laugh] put together in order to be supportive and give them the pointers as to what they need to think about (...) they would call this a bureaucracy; if you wouldn't give them the templates (...) they would call this unsupportive and totally arbitrary (angry).” (Participant 12)

Participant 04 (Professor of Media in a Post-92 University) provides a detailed anecdote describing the formal process at his institution for making a minor change to a module title:

You change a unit, ‘*Interface Design for the Web*’. <Lecturer name> retitled it ‘*Designing the Web*’, the next FTQSC <Faculty Teaching Quality Standards Committee> decide that's not a good title and it should be called, ‘*Designing for the Web*’. And one three letter word, [laughter] and because of a breakdown in communication, I failed to get the forms back in for the next meeting, by which time, it had missed the window for merely being changed by chair's action. It had to be resubmitted which means I had to redo the UChange <Unit Change Form>, the UIF <Unit Information Form> and the CIF <Course Information Form> to include the word ‘for’ and it's now going, hopefully, if I don't mess it up again, it's going to the February meeting. So we should with a bit of luck by next Autumn, we'll be able to include the word, ‘for’. [laughter]. (Participant 04)

His follow-up remarks demonstrate how he sees the formal quality assurance process in relationship to the practical instantiation of the module; irrelevant:

In theory, we shouldn't be teaching it at the moment because it's not validated. (Participant 04)

A striking feature of this anecdote is the length of time involved in making what appears to be, from an academic point of view, a relatively small change. The rate

of change of course design was also a feature of the response from Participant 15 who, when asked whether she had experience of introducing changes to her course during an interview for this study that took place in mid-2013, remarked in a 'matter-of-fact' way:

Not really. That might (surprised) be because (...) as I say I've only been involved in teaching since 2007 so I haven't seen a massive change. (confused). (Participant 15)

Given the evolution of the media industries together with the academic research output and developments in teaching, learning and assessment over that period, the relatively unchanged delivery of the course over about six years seems remarkable. But more importantly in this analysis, the participant seems to view this rate of change as normal and unproblematic. This contrasts with a portrayal (Collini, 2012) of contemporary '*managerial*' universities as dynamic, responsive, 'business-like' organisations that respond swiftly to fast-changing economic imperatives and external '*customer*' demands.

Participants 08 and 12 set out a rationale for formal quality assurance processes that is based on the safeguarding of the students' experience of assessment (Participant 08), protection against 'maverick' individual academics (Participant 12) and the prevailing inevitability of such processes (Participant 11). As Collini notes:

"We persuade ourselves that, for all its imperfections, a regime of 'quality assurance' at least provides some check upon idleness, incompetence, and corruption." (Collini, 2012, p.108)

These three participants span across academic roles (08 and 11) and centralised, professional responsibility for quality assurance and enhancement (12). However,

Participants 08 and 11 are both in a Head of Department role and therefore are likely to be accountable for the effective operation of quality assurance processes within their department. This may underlie their response in this area, as they are more likely to see the benefits of such processes in securing external validation of the quality and standards of their media courses – they are *managers* and are formally accountable for the implementation of university policies which may sit awkwardly with the academic aspects of their role. All three responses were based on the value of formal quality assurance as a safeguard against falling standards rather than suggesting an element of quality enhancement in the process, despite significant emphasis being placed on enhancement by the Quality Assurance Agency:

“The processes provide assurance, and identify any problems which need to be resolved, but also enable good practice to be identified, built upon and shared, providing opportunities for continuous improvement of the programme and the student experience. Higher education providers ensure that processes are designed in such a way to enable this balance between assurance and enhancement to be achieved.”

(Quality Assurance Agency, 2013, Chapter B8, p.4)

Participants 15 and 16 are Course Leaders and therefore also have an academic leadership role that probably includes responsibility for the implementation of quality assurance processes and procedures in relation to their course. Their responses here show a largely negative perception of quality assurance processes. Both participants refer to the *bureaucratic* nature of the processes.

A common theme among higher education commentators is a perceived negative shift from a university as a collegiate body of autonomous scholars to the organisation of higher education along ‘*managerial*’ lines with an associated

reduction in the autonomy of academic staff. Whilst noting *A History of the University in Europe* (Rüegg, 2004, p.ii) as making the observation that “*The university is the only European institution to have preserved its fundamental patterns and basic social role and function over the course of the last millennium*”, Collini (2012, p.22) goes on to describe contemporary universities as “*highly managerial corporate enterprises in which scholars are rather lowly employees*”. He elaborates on this to characterise the relationship between academics and their university by using the language of business and enterprise:

“The experience of being a senior academic now, especially one involved in chairing a department or directing a research centre, may seem to more closely resemble that of being a middle-rank executive in a business organisation than it does that of being an independent scholar or freelance teacher...” (Collini, 2012, p.19)

This section considers the participant responses that shed light on their perceptions of their autonomy and the way they operate as individuals and groups within a corporate higher education institution.

The participants gave some responses that can be seen as indicative of a hierarchical, managerial organisation. For example, when explaining her role in the organisation, Participant 01 (a Teaching Enhancement Developer based within a university centralised teaching and learning unit) defined her position with reference to a hierarchical structure and in relation to another post, whom she describes as “one of her bosses”:

The Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and then that leads straight into the Director of Teaching and Learning who is the Head of the Centre for Learning Excellence. One of my bosses. (Participant 01)

Participant 15 gives a clear indication of an environment where there is a very clear sense of what is ‘allowed’ with a depiction of two distinct ‘sides’ denoted by ‘we’ and ‘they’:

“...and then we say “this is what we want to do...can we do it? And they tell us whether we can, by the rules.” (Participant 15)

Whilst Participant 15 describes a stark divide between academic staff and professional staff with an audit and regulatory function a consideration of the power in this relationship is shown to be more complex than the “*they tell us whether we can*” of Participant 15 would suggest.

Technically, no you can't do whatever w- you want. Even though (surprised) for personal projects you know th- the MD, the module definition form is so wide and so they can do whatever you want even in, even if you study film and television production i-if you want to do an installation you can do installation and we had an installation this year... (Participant 07)

Participant 07 (Lecturer, Post-92 University) leads his response with the same general view; “*no you can't do whatever w- you want*” but by proceeding that with “*Technically*” suggests that this is not the complete picture and that there is an alternative. He then elaborates on this with a description of a strategy of deliberate ambiguity in the construction of formal course documentation (“*the module definition form is so wide and so they can do whatever you want*”). This indicates an academic staff tactic of writing a module specification so that it contains the necessary elements to obtain formal approval for delivery but is expressed in a generalised way to allow a range of legitimate interpretations when implemented. There is a further clue to this participant’s view of this process in the second part of his phrase (“*they can do whatever you want*”). From the complete response it is clear that here, “*they*” refers to the students and so

the phrase reveals that the participant sees control of the situation as lying with academic staff, “you”. He does not say, “*they can do whatever **they** want*”. He does not see this ambiguity as empowering the students but sees it as a way for academic staff to exercise control over the implementation of a module. In this specific case, the example given by the participant is the interpretation of the module definition for the students’ personal project that allows them to produce an ‘installation’; a piece of installed artwork even though they are registered on a course in film and television where the personal project is more likely to be expected to produce a piece of work for film and/or television. This participant is working within an art school environment where installation work is probably common within other courses but can be seen here as somewhat subversive.

The perception of power and control amongst academic staff is indicated very clearly in the response of Participant 14 who asserts within the context of his passion for film and film-making:

“you know what (...) we are going to provide for these people what we think is best (angry), not what government thinks is best for them, what industry thinks is best but what we as (...) university thinks is best for these people. (softly spoken)” (Participant 14)

This response, by making a distinction between government, industry and universities, implies that the views of each are different but asserts the primacy of “*we as university*” in making students aware of a canon of films that has credibility within an academic discourse with little concern for outside influences.

Participant 15 (Course Leader, Russell Group University) describes the process for making changes to her course as:

Everything has to go through a, a teaching and learning committee (...) and takes (...) approximately (...) between six months and a year to implement so we have to think about these things (...) well in advance. It's- Depart- Departmental level that then reports to a faculty level. But things get (...) rubber stamped at the, at the departmental level, (angry) they go through the director of learning and teaching who holds a committee, all heads of programmes are on the committee and various other positions. And if you want to change anything about a module (...)such as the type of assessment or the amount of lectures you're going to give or (...) the curriculum of that module (...) it has to (...) go beyond- before that committee who considers that that is the right (...) thing to do. (Participant 15)

Again, this features a process that she sees as slow and hierarchical with a suggestion that some of it may be rather perfunctory with a reference to “*rubber stamped*”. However, the process described is a collective, essentially academic, decision making activity (“*they go through the director of learning and teaching who holds a committee, all heads of programmes are on the committee and various other positions*”, “*it has to (...) go beyond- before that committee who considers that that is the right (...) thing to do.*”). This participant was then invited to elaborate on the role of a centralised, professional university quality assurance service in this process. Significantly, the participant was initially quite confused by this idea, as shown by the dialogue with the interviewer:

Interviewer: Yeah so is, is there a sort of professional (...) direct quality directorate (high tone) type function within the university that (...) sort of oversees these processes, or?

Participant 15: Well there's the faculty level (...) teaching and learning committee. (confused)

Interviewer: Yeah but who- who- is that, but that, that that's academics? (confused)

Participant 15: Yes. (high tone)

Interviewer: Yes.

Participant 15: So you're talking about-

Interviewer: I mean they are sort of professional support staff in their (...) quality (confused) area?

Participant 15: Such as? (confused)

This dialogue suggests collective academic decision-making on a peer-to-peer basis underpins the management of course changes within this department and probably faculty and university rather than a managerial approach. After further clarification, the participant confirms the nature of the input from professional service staff:

We have administrative staff who are on that committee and who are part of it so (...) yes, there's somebody who I- [sigh] I can't remember her name but she's the- she, she's (...) what you're talking about the, the administrative e-equivalent of the faculty level direct-director of learning and teaching and she will be at all meetings. So if we say "well (...) you know we want to take chairs action to change the exam on this because it's going to do something" (...) you know she'll advise us of the guidelines and policies as to whether we're allowed (...) to do that. (Participant 15)

The participant is aware of the contribution of a person she identifies as "administrative" but her response is quite vague as she does not recall the name of this person or their exact job title. She also identifies the contribution of this person as advisory. The impression is one of a collegiate academic process rather than a managerial one – a situation that may be attributable to the institutional context of a large Russell Group university with a long tradition of academically-driven decision making.

Summary and Conclusions

This consideration of the formal interactions of the oppositional discourses of national and institutional '*managerialism*' and academic '*collegiality*' and '*freedom*' provides evidence of the power relationships at work. Academic staff in a variety of media studies settings demonstrate how they have assimilated the discourse of '*quality assurance*', working with institutional colleagues to deliver prescribed outcomes, with some variation across the sector. However, these processes are maintained at arms length through a discourse of distancing; '*aliens*' and '*ghosts*', demonstrating that power is again in tension and that through discursive practices, media studies academics are capable of 'getting things done', in spite of '*new managerialism*'.

6-4 Theory and Practice: “The Woodwork Masters”

Introduction

“Sure, it works in practice, but does it work in theory?” (T-Shirt Slogan, University of Chicago Economics Department)

“This paper will attempt to argue the proposition that degree-level or postgraduate work in film can make only limited sense if it is restricted to *either* practice *or* theory, along with the corresponding proposition that it is the political and cultural responsibility of educational institutions to offer courses which teach both and which try to make sense of each in relation to the other.” (Williams, 1981, p.85)

The relationship, if any, between theory and practice is a debate within media studies that echoes through the development of the subject. William’s 1981 introduction to his BFI Education *Film and Media Studies in Higher Education* conference paper gives a flavour of the debate. As a pointer to a discourse shifting across time it is worth highlighting the phrase “*the political and cultural responsibility of education institutions*” and comparing this with the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills, Vince Cable’s much more recent view that “*Modern economies are knowledge based and universities are central to how we prepare for that*” (Cable, 2010). The idea that universities might have explicit institutional political and cultural responsibilities would not now feature so prominently within the discourse around the role of universities in the public sphere. The role of the university as a driver of economic growth would be more prevalent and dominates the discourse. So whilst Williams’ propositions may be framed slightly anachronistically, the preoccupation with the relationship between theory and practice within media studies still readily surfaces in a discussion of the subject and the participants in this study frequently made

reference to it within their responses. Responses from eleven of the participants are presented here.

Analysis

Participant 15 (course leader at a Russell Group university) sees the theory/practice debate as one of a number of challenges:

And the balance between practical and theoretical (...) is something that is (...) I don't want to use the word 'challenging' again because I've just said it lots of times (happy). (Participant 15)

When raised by academic staff participants '*theory*' and '*practice*' were sometimes framed as very definite divisions in the subject. Most graphically, Participant 04 recalled from his experience that:

I have it on good authority that at least one of the theory lecturers used to refer to the practice lecturers as the woodwork masters. (Participant 04)

This view of theory and practice very clearly privileges theory over practice with what is probably an elitist derogatory reference to 1950s selective education in the UK when woodwork was seen as a suitable activity for children at secondary modern schools and distinct from an academic grammar school education (Musgrove and Taylor, 1969). Participant 04 goes on to elaborate by describing two alternatives; a curriculum model that is clearly delimited between elements that are considered '*theory*' and elements that are considered '*practice*' and an alternative where there is a degree of integration. Participant 10 also refers to a clearly delimited delivery of theory and practice, with the practice seen as "fun" when compared to the theory:

They do practice on Wednesdays, they do theory on Thursdays and they have assessments in each, and that's great. That's fine. Then there are the models where they try and [...] introduce the theory to the practice and the practice to the theory. As I understand it, I mean. (Participant 04)

Modules where you can actually show where they're making sense practically, er are obviously the best way to do it rather than having a more, "We'll have our theory lessons and we'll have a bit of fun practice afterwards". (Participant 10)

So having set up this strong dichotomy where theory and practice are either two distinct strands to media studies or at least two distinct entities that need to be integrated, it is important to understand how the participants construct this theory/practice framework and how they delimit '*theory*' and '*practice*'. Participant 04 continues by making a link between '*practice*' and '*vocational*' and between '*theory*' and the non-vocational aspects of a media studies course but also expresses the view that this link is unhelpful and should be discouraged:

There is always a tendency to map the practical onto the vocational and the theoretical, critical onto a non-vocational, (...) and this is an interesting; it's an interesting, different way of seeing the problem that one wants to sort of work against that division becoming too strong in anyone's minds. (Participant 04)

This view of theory and practice resonates with the modalities identified by Elliot in his consideration of pedagogic discourse in relation to integrated theory/practice courses in media studies:

"...it is possible to distinguish between on the one hand courses which teach media (or other) theories and practices to prepare students for work in the media production market, and on the other those which teach them to develop what can be described as a *critical disposition* towards the media (or more widely towards popular culture). I shall call the first modality the *vocational*, and the second the *autonomous*." (Elliot, 2000, p.19)

Having established these modalities, which appear to set up a further dichotomy, implying that the '*vocational*' is characterised by a lack of autonomy, Elliot sets out the challenges associated with the breaking down of the divisions that Participant 04 perceives negatively:

"...theory-practice courses are structured by pedagogic discourses which project a 'split' pedagogic subject, that is, a pedagogic subject which is unable to integrate the two or more forms of social relation, identity, and order which are associated respectively with 'theory' and 'practice'. Unless a course mediates the relationship differently, the kind of reflexivity and self-reflexivity associated with 'theory' discourses is incompatible with the relatively unselfconscious reproduction of *techne* associated with 'craft' forms of media production." (Elliot, 2000, p.30)

For Elliot, the construction of a "'split' pedagogic subject" with a '*theory*' discourse that he associates with reflexivity and a '*practice*' discourse that he regards as unselfconscious sets up a dichotomy that, by its nature, will be difficult to integrate; if academics talk about '*the theory*' and '*the practice*', the focus will be on the differences and not the commonality. In posing this dilemma Elliot points to '*the course*' as a mechanism of mediating this relationship and so the ways in which participants relate theory/practice to course structure and design is significant (see below).

The views of Participant 04, an experienced and senior member of academic staff, are significant when compared to the response of Participant 05, a media studies graduate now working in the broadcast television industry whose responses seem to embody Elliot's 'unselfconsciousness'. Whilst the academic member of staff regards theory and practice as distinct and important concepts, the graduate appears to have collapsed the two ideas and regards *practice* as

making films and *theory* as knowledge of how to make films; “*knowing how to frame a shot*”, “*knowing about camera angles*”:

Okay, well in my opinion, I think theory is important, because you know, little things like knowing how to frame a shot, or knowing why... knowing about camera angles like when <lecturer name>, is it <lecturer name>? You know, knowing about camera angles, was useful, and also knowing about script, and pacing and things like that was quite useful. The only thing that would've been useful, looking back, was we did a little bit of theory to start off with, but then we started filming, and I think we never came back to theory?
(Participant 05)

Although a first reading of this response suggests that the participant shares little of the academic's view of the value of theory (“*I think we never came back to theory*”), there are clues that there may be more similarity in their perceptions than first appears. Although he does not elaborate, Participant 05 does include the phrase “*knowing why*”, a question more likely to be answered by a theoretical perspective on the subject. Although it is in reference to production practices, it is possible that “*knowing about script, and pacing and things like that*” implies an understanding of the ways in which meanings are created for an audience within the moving image and so suggests a theoretical, albeit totally integrated, understanding of the media in addition to practice-based knowledge and skills. Participant 03, also a media graduate, expresses similar ideas but is more explicit in drawing the connections between film theory and film-making practice:

I got more than I expected. I mean, the fact that I was spending a lot of my time understanding film from a theory point of view gave me a good grounding for when I started making films structurally, for narratives for the way that they're created and the way that they're produced. (Participant 03)

For an academic staff viewpoint of this, Participant 18 (a member of academic staff who self-identifies as a 'theory lecturer') makes a succinct case for a theory-led approach to the integration of theory and practice:

You need to watch a lot, then you need to understand a lot [laughs], then you can make it (Participant 18)

This phrase summarises an approach based on a familiarity with a canon of work ("watch a lot") and a theoretical and critical understanding of film ("understand a lot") as prerequisites for undertaking practical production work ("then you can make it"). And, as a rhetorical device, speaking as though he were a 'practice lecturer':

"the thing is, it takes me three minutes to teach someone how to point a camera. It takes you, the theory guy, three years to teach someone what to point the camera at". (Participant 18)

Whilst Participant 03 and Participant 05 welcomed the opportunities provided by practice-based learning to enhance their practice-based skills, knowledge and experience in preparation for professional practice, Participant 14 had a different approach to theory and practice when looking for a course to study:

I saw the course at <university> which was kind of very theory based, it was always all theory at the time, there was no (...) practical. (...) really excited me, so I kind of consciously took a-because I was (....) I had a plan to make stuff anyway so I didn't really want to go and do anything that was too practical (...) 'cause I was quite interested in just (...) making it up as I went along. If I make stuff, you know what's, what's the impact of that going to be contextually and conceptually? (...) and I guess theoretically as well I was, you know (...) it was all new, so it was all exciting. All theoretical. (Participant 14)

His choice of course was based on the premise that he would have access to practice opportunities outside university ("*I had a plan to make stuff anyway*") and so the best value to him would be obtained from accessing the theoretical aspects of media studies, an opportunity not readily accessible outside higher

education. He perceives a theoretical understanding very positively (*“all theory at the time, there was no (...) practical. (...) really excited me”, “it was all new, so it was all exciting. All theoretical.”*). This emphasis on theory is not independent of practice though (*“If I make stuff, you know what's, what's the impact of that going to be contextually and conceptually? (...) and I guess theoretically as well”*) but it is expressed as a concern for the impact of his future practice rather than seeing a theoretical understanding of the media as a necessary precursor to professional practice.

Participant 10 is an experienced lecturer and course leader and she alludes to the important (*“absolutely crucial”*), continual, on-going and perhaps necessarily unresolved tensions between theory and practice in media studies (*“one of those ones that we’ve always debated”, “debate fully [emphatic] er and at length”*):

I think that’s absolutely crucial and it’s one of those ones that we’ve always debated isn’t it? And I think courses with any practical content debate fully and at length. Erm (...) for me I think the best way to integrate theory and practice is, is having both run alongside, both modules actually, er modules actually having theory and practice within it, erm and they’re at their strongest when they do that.
(Participant 10)

Although this participant sees the theory/practice debate as on-going and unresolved she does have personal views on the best way of integrating theory and practice within a curriculum (*“modules actually having theory and practice within it, erm and they’re at their strongest when they do that”*). This refers to course design within a modular/unitised framework where a course consists of a sequence of discrete teaching/learning elements normally primarily defined by a number of intended learning outcomes, aims/objectives, a programme of learning

activities and opportunities and associated formative and summative assessment.

Successful completion of the course is defined as successful completion of the summative assessments of the constituent modules/units:

“Viewed as a learning theory, the philosophy of modular course design asserts that teaching and learning activities can be quantified. Measurement of size, arrangement, equivalence, and outcomes are introduced which can in turn be manipulated in a variety of ways to reflect local or national circumstances. In this way a system of curriculum accountancy is created.” (Bell and Wade, 1993, p.3)

When designing theory and practice elements within a modular framework there can be a tendency to create ‘theory modules’ and ‘practice modules’. The reasons for this can be through module delivery staff self-identifying as ‘theory lecturers’ or ‘practice lecturers’ (see Participant 04 above), organisational access to appropriate learning resources and spaces, or constraints on methods of summative assessment.

Bell and Wade note in their review of modular course design that:

“...whilst the construct of a module of teaching and learning is apparently neutral, its deployment in the field of education and training is not and can never be value free. In this way, modular course design can be as much a move back to the traditional and conventional as a change away from the old order.” (Bell and Wade, 1993, 5-6)

The way learning is structured into a media studies course consisting of units/modules gives an indication of the values and principles of the designers although it needs to be recognised that a range of constraints (see sections 6-2 and 6-3) may limit the scope of the course designer(s) to implement their preferred structure.

This correspondence between the compartmentalisation of media studies into theory and practice and the framework of course design is also recognised by Participant 15 (Russell Group course leader) with “*the balance of modules on the programme*” being associated with the “*balance between academic and practical*”:

...So we've got a sort of balance and that reflects th-the balance of modules on the programme (...) and the balance between academic and, and practical... (Participant 15)

In this response however, the dichotomy is posed slightly differently with a reference to ‘*academic*’ rather than ‘*theory*’ and ‘*practical*’ rather than ‘*practice*’.

This is an important distinction because, by setting up the two terms as entities to be ‘*balanced*’, there is an implication that they are distinct and so, for this participant, ‘*practical*’ work is not ‘*academic*’. To further understand the implications of this, the use of the term ‘*academic*’ by this participant requires further contextualisation. Deriving from its Platonic origins, a dictionary definition of the term when used, as here, as an adjective is “*of, relating to, or associated with an academy or school especially of higher learning*” (Merriam-Webster). Collini sees the term ‘*academic*’ as “*a tricky, loaded word, but one which here suggests the pull away from the practical to forms of enquiry with their own protocols and ambitions*” (Collini, 2012, p.27). This would suggest that, despite leading a course that values ‘*practical*’ work and arguing a case for its role in developing students’ skills, the participant does not see it as intrinsic to the activities of a university, at least in media studies. This may relate to what Elbow terms ‘*academic discourse*’ which he defines, in the context of academic writing, as “*the discourse that academics use when they publish for other academics*” (Elbow, 1991, p.135). As this participant is part of a university that emphasises its

research-intensive focus and a department that concentrates on communications studies, she is associating '*academic*' with research that results in written and published outcomes (rather than the practice-led research carried out within departments that take a more art school approach to media studies) and is giving primacy within the undergraduate programme to theoretical ideas and written work. The '*academic*' discourse is constructed and constrained by what people who identify themselves as '*academics*' feel they can and cannot say to each other.

Conversely, the use of the term '*practical*' rather than the term '*practice*' by Participant 15 indicates that she sees a role for practical elements in a course but this is not synonymous with professional practice, aspects of which would probably be considered '*academic*'. When prompted to elaborate on practical aspects of the students' work, the details provided by the participant all relate to extra-curricular activities rather than integrated practical learning opportunities with associated assessment and any attempt at the formal integration of theory and practice:

I mean a lot of them do work in the student media that we have which is all brilliant and award-winning. We've got <university>'s student newspaper, <university> student radio <university> student TV lots of them go off and get placements in local (...) media organisations but (...) yeah, the practical element is very, very important. (Participant 15)

The examples of practical work in the response are all student-led and likely to be part of the student union activities rather than a formal part of the course. The participant does then go on to point to students completing relevant work placement activities within the local media industry. These are likely to still be

extra-curricular with an emphasis on the students taking responsibility for finding the placements (“*lots of them go off and get...*”). So the participant asserts that practical work is “*very, very important*” but sees it as outside the formal ‘academic’ content of the course and not essential as a means of exploring and challenging theoretical approaches, a rationale that is invoked for courses that adopt a more integrated theory/practice position.

This view of the relative value and importance of theoretical and practical work contrasts with the response of participant 06 (course leader working in a post-1992 university art school environment) who contrasts students who are committed to making practical work with others who she refers to as taking “*the whimsical route*”:

I think what’s really interesting is that those students who are committed, those that aren’t pursuing the whimsical route but those students that are really committed (...) want to, to make projects and so they will take on work experience. (Participant 06)

This participant is convinced of the value of practical work and sees the learning coming from the opportunities to try new things and to learn, in a supportive environment, from what goes wrong:

What’s the point of students doing practical work (...) in terms of their learning? (...) What do they learn? They learn from their mistakes. (Participant 06)

And it is to learn, it is to facilitate that learning process in an environment where they are not penalised in terms of industry for the mistakes that they make. You know it’s actually learning from those mistakes, so if you’re learning to work within a production team those tensions will exist. (Participant 06)

Participant 08 is the head of a media department within a small specialist arts institution that identifies with the ‘art school tradition’. She does not see their

courses as solely 'practice-based' but characterises them more subtly as 'practice-led' ("we're very much about the practice, so all the theory and all the questioning grows out of what people make and do").

We don't do that much on the politics of the media, on media institutions, on journalism, we don't do much on public relations, so the kind of, what you might think is the more theoretical aspects of media. Erm, we're very much about the practice, so all the theory and all the questioning grows out of what people make and do.
(Participant 08)

The practice-led approach outlined here is characterised by Archer:

"There are circumstances where the best or only way to shed light on a proposition, a principle, a material, a process or a function is to attempt to construct something, or to enact something, calculated to explore, embody or test it." (Archer, 1995, p.10)

Participant 08 then elaborates on the implications of this for teaching and learning practices within her institution. The consideration of theoretical concepts is not synonymous with 'written work'. Learning is driven by the production of media artefacts and this process is used to surface concepts ("using the work as the starting point to talk about, I don't know, gender representation, or something"):

The teaching styles here would be ... there's much less written work, more production work and lots more crits so there's a kind of critical discussion that goes on using the work as the starting point to talk about, I don't know, gender representation, or something.
(Participant 08)

In describing this process, the participant refers to the use of 'crits' (a contraction of 'critiques') as a means of exploring the conceptual and theoretical issues that arise from the production of media artefacts.

“Formal design critiques, or crits, are occasions where each student’s work is publicly discussed in the presence of the exhibiting student, their class mates and often other instructors, invited critics and guests. In these assessment interactions the student and instructor meet face-to-face and give personal voice to the wider debates that occur within design, and design education.” (Oak, 2000, p.88-89)

Although widespread in art and design education and so present in media studies courses delivered with an ‘art school’ ethos, its value as a method of summative assessment has been questioned, notably by Jones with a concern that there is an *“unresolved connection between formative and summative assessment occasions brought about by an apparently unavoidable association between the work of students and the students themselves”* (Jones, 1996, p.133). This issue is described more graphically by Henderson and Till:

“Looked at from the outside, the crit can appear as a perverse form of anthropological ritual. The macho, adrenaline fuelled atmosphere means that the crit is too often a thing to survive rather than an event to learn from. Many students think of the crit as an ordeal devised by tutors to leave them feeling as though they have been undressed in public.” (Henderson and Till, 2007, p. vii)

A response from Participant 05, a media graduate, does point to a primacy for practice:

Well, my idea is, you don’t get, if someone asks you to make a TV show, they don’t say ‘write an essay about it’ they say, ‘go make it’. So that’s, I think that’s probably why you practise this stuff, isn’t it? Yeah... you know, surgeons practise on corpses and medical bodies, they don’t get straight in on a [laughter]. They don’t write essays on it! [comical]. (Participant 05)

In this response he does not directly characterise the dichotomy as ‘theory’ and ‘practice’ but relates it to the course teaching and learning activities by referring to *“they don’t say ‘write an essay about it’ they say, go make it”*. Here ‘they’ refers to the television industry (*“if someone asks you to make a TV show”*) and so has the implication that this participant feels that the media industries are more

interested in the mechanics of making a television programme than they are in the context. The participant then goes on to assert the efficacy of practice-led learning by relating it to the traditional *vocational* subject of medicine and the learning that trainee surgeons undertake through simulation activities (“*surgeons practise on corpses and medical bodies*”) before they carry out surgery on patients. This response points towards the participant’s view of the value of practice-led learning as he then goes on to make the point that trainee surgeons do not and cannot learn the skills of manual dexterity associated with performing surgery by learning the theoretical aspects of medicine (“*They don’t write essays on it! [comical].*”). It is doubtful that this statement indicates that the participant thinks that there is no role for the theoretical aspects of medicine in the education of surgeons, rather he is making a specific point about the best way of acquiring particular skills required for professional practice in this area.

The context of this remark is also worthy of consideration. At the time of the interview, Participant 05 was working on the Channel Four television programme *Embarrassing Bodies*:

At the moment I’m working as a researcher on *Embarrassing Bodies* on Channel 4 and *Embarrassing Bodies: Live* on Channel 4.
(Participant 05)

This current professional practice experience may explain why this particular comparison spontaneously occurred to the participant as he had been working within a number of medical settings as part of the research for the programme. It is also a programme that raises a number of theoretical issues around media representation and media ethics (Hadley, 2012) but the participant has not made

any direct link in the interview between the theoretical aspects of the media course that he studied and his current professional practice.

The responses of Participant 09, a course leader for a Foundation Degree media programme delivered by an FE/HE college, highlight the potential tensions that can arise from a consideration of theory and practice within this context:

We look at sort of business elements of media production, different types of contracts, ... and then alongside that of course we have media theory where we explore the usual stuff really, the usual media theory of film discourse and analysis in film. (Participant 09)

We're hoping in a way that we can give students enough kind of theoretical knowledge to move into a third year so they're not left behind, but at the same time if they wanna finish after two years and wanna set themselves up as, you know, freelance video producers, you know, doing anything from wedding videos to pop music videos. (Participant 09)

Foundation Degrees were introduced to UK higher education in 2000 and are Level Five qualifications within the UK Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) (Quality Assurance Agency, 2010). Full-time students generally study a foundation degree for two years, entering with FHEQ Level Three qualifications or the equivalent. On completion of the course there is an expectation that students will be equipped to enter employment related to the area of study although foundation degree graduates may also continue to study by entering an honours degree course at FHEQ Level Six, a route many foundation degree graduates pursue. For example, according to a 2007 Report for the University of Plymouth, sixty-six percent of students graduating from foundation degrees delivered by Plymouth's University Partner Colleges consortium in 2005 were undertaking further study with over ninety per cent of

those undertaking a 'top-up' year to achieve an honours degree (Lintern and Hicks, 2007).

The specific rationale for foundation degrees, according to the Quality Assurance Agency is to:

"provide graduates who are needed within the labour market to address shortages in particular skills. Foundation Degrees also aim to contribute to widening participation and lifelong learning by encouraging participation by learners who may not previously have considered studying for a higher level qualification." (QAA, 2010, p.1)

The language of this definition contributes to the higher education as '*economic driver*' discourse with the terms "*needed*", "*labour market*" and "*shortages*" together with a definition of foundation degrees in terms of "*skills*". The rationale then goes beyond this to define a role for foundation degrees in "*widening participation*" and "*lifelong learning*". The term '*widening participation*' was adopted by central government following the Kennedy Report (1997) and was a major feature of UK higher education policy over the ensuing decade (Jones, 2008) although Jones questions whether a policy distinction was made between '*widening participation*' and '*increasing participation*'. A prominent policy aim for the Blair government over this period was to increase participation in higher education to fifty per cent by 2010, a goal that could be achieved by increasing the depth of participation by groups already well represented within the higher education student population rather than increasing the participation of under-represented groups. It is within this public sphere discourse that the response of Participant 09 needs to be considered.

When this participant frames theory and practice within the context of a foundation degree, his first characterisation is one of overt business-related course content and the contractual arrangements around media production as a commercial activity (*"We look at sort of business elements of media production, erm different types of contracts"*) and this is contrasted with *"the usual stuff"* which he expands on as *"the usual media theory of film discourse and analysis in film"*. So whilst the sector rationale for a foundation degree is accommodated by course content that directly relates to professional practice that is relevant to the course title and the participant leads his response with this aspect, this is followed by a reference to theory-based content that he considers conventional and uncontroversial (*"the usual stuff"*). His expansion of this as *"the usual media theory of film discourse and analysis in film"* is not particularly distinguishable from the ways the theoretical aspects of many media studies courses may be described. This suggests that whilst the sector, government and regulatory rationales for honours degrees and foundation degrees might emphasise their distinctiveness and higher education institutions might seek to differentiate their offering from the courses offered by other institutions, the evidence from these participants points towards a more shared understanding of what constitutes appropriate theory-based material in a media course. This demonstrates an instantiation of the 'academic discourse' discussed above.

An explanation of the lack of differentiation between this foundation degree and honours degree programmes in media studies can be derived from the next part of the participant's response (*"We're hoping in a way that we can give students enough kind of theoretical knowledge to move into a third year so they're not left*

behind”). This relates to the evidence from the University of Plymouth (see above) that students often study foundation degrees as a stepping-stone to an honours degree rather than as a standalone qualification leading directly to professional practice in the area of study. The participant’s concern is to ensure that foundation degree graduates can integrate with existing cohorts of honours degree undergraduates as they complete the final year of an honours degree programme together. This leads Participant 09 to equate the ‘*theory*’ elements of the foundation degree to preparation for continuing study to honours degree level and the ‘*practice*’ elements as equipping students with skills relevant to the professional practice opportunities that he envisages for students graduating from the foundation degree after two years of full-time study (*“finish after two years and wanna set themselves up as, you know, freelance video producers, you know, doing anything from wedding videos to pop music videos”*). This response also gives an insight into the participant’s view of the nature of professional practice opportunities available to his graduating students with an emphasis on self-employment and freelance careers rather than traditional ‘graduate’ careers. For universities, a key measure of student ‘success’ on graduating is the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education Survey (DLHE) as the outcomes are used as a factor in a number of media-generated university league tables. Montgomery has identified self-employment as a significant factor in graduate careers within the media industries:

“For some graduates, self-employment or freelancing is central to employment within key areas such as arts, design and media. Graduates who worked for themselves as arts, design and media professionals made up 42.1% of all self-employed graduates and this is often the only route into employment as artists, sculptors, musicians, dancers, actors and broadcasters.” (Montgomery, 2013 p.8)

Two further responses relate not to the primacy of theory or practice but the sequencing as part of a media studies education. Participant 10 relates '*theory*' to '*observation*' which denotes a rather passive activity based on the critical consumption and analysis of media artefacts but sees that as a prerequisite to the production of new artefacts:

Because of course the theory is about observation but the practice they are involved in making and actually putting that observation in, into practice. (Participant 10)

Participant 19 takes a more extreme view of this approach and asserts that practice-based film-making should be regarded as a postgraduate-level activity or, at least, an activity for mature students rather than being an element of an undergraduate course:

And I just think, at 18, these kids don't know enough. They're not ready enough. I would rather that all filmmaking course start at 21. Do your first degree, and then let's do film-making. (Participant 19)

Directed particularly at students entering higher education at the youngest possible age and probably coming directly from full-time education in a school or college, the participant perceives this group as lacking sufficient knowledge ("don't know enough") and maturity ("*kids*", "*They're not ready enough*") to become effective film-makers on completion of an undergraduate degree. The participant does not directly specify the preferred undergraduate activity, she just says, "*Do your first degree*" but her view is that it should not contain practical film-making, expressing a view similar to that noted above from Participant 18:

You need to watch a lot, then you need to understand a lot [laughs], then you can make it. (Participant 18)

Both participants see a need for the development of conceptual and critical thinking skills as a pre-requisite to professional practice. Whilst Participant 18

sees this in terms of a specific ability to critically read media texts (“*watch a lot*”, “*understand a lot*”), Participant 19 takes this further with the view that any unspecified undergraduate degree could serve as vehicle for developing the knowledge and skills necessary to begin to learn to practice as a professional film-maker.

Summary and Conclusions

This analysis of the participants’ views of the terms ‘*theory*’ and ‘*practice*’ and their perception of the relationship between them provides some insight into the broader questions posed by this study. When considered alongside the ways these terms frame the participants’ perception of media studies and the corresponding academic literature a picture of media studies emerges that can be considered alongside the public sphere discourse around the nature and purpose of higher education in general and media studies specifically. Whilst the participants consider ‘*theory*’ and ‘*practice*’ as largely matters of course content and pedagogy there are clear linkages between their ideas of ‘*theory*’ and ‘*practice*’ within media studies and a rationale for media studies that could be to produce economically-active media practitioners or informed and critical citizens, or both.

This analysis of discourses of theory/practice complements the discourses of subject identity explored in the previous chapter and demonstrates some of the connections between the identity of media studies as a subject and the discursive academic practices that follow from that.

6-5 Assessment: “Here’s your degree, darling, go”

Introduction

But it’s a terrible thing to say, actually. [Laughs]. Work in a university and say “I don’t believe in assessment”. [Laughs]... ...I mean, I almost feel that what we should do is forget exams altogether just give every student who comes in a bloody degree at the end. “Here’s your degree, darling, go”. (Participant 19)

Whilst there is substantial debate and discussion around the nature of media studies, its purpose and characteristics, both publically and within the academy, attitudes crystallise, starkly in the case of this participant, when reduced to a discussion of assessment—a dialogue where a sophisticated dialectic of learning outcomes and assessment criteria is distilled down to ‘just tell me what I have to do to pass’ (Biggs, 1999; Prosser and Trigwell, 2001). This analysis draws on responses from three participants.

For Richard Wakeford, the importance of assessment is summarised (in Fry, Ketteridge and Marshall, 2001, p.58) as:

“...assessment is an integral component of the teaching and learning system... ...student perceptions of what is rewarded and what is ignored by more formal examination procedures will have a substantial impact upon their learning behaviour and thus upon the outcomes of a course... ...we need assessment to be accurate because it is pointless and unfair to students if it is otherwise.”

An analysis of the participant responses together with a critique from the literature suggests that as one of the social practices that defines media studies, the assessment of student-produced media artefacts cannot be reconciled with a discourse that conceives assessment as potentially ‘*accurate*’, leading to the response of Participant 19 (above) that suggests assessment may indeed be ‘*pointless*’.

Analysis

Within media studies particularly, assessment is inextricably linked to the themes of this study and so, although participants were not asked directly about their perceptions of assessment, some of them choose to frame their responses to other prompts with reference to assessment practices.

Participant 09 points to the relationship between assessment and other themes of the study by describing various assessment formats and distinguishing between them:

So most of the units have a presentation, have a written piece, an essay if you like, or sometimes a report, depending on if it's vocational ... more vocational and a practical piece. (Participant 09)

This taxonomy of assessment is based on whether he sees the unit as “*more vocational*”, associating *reports* with the more vocational units and *essays*, by inference, with less vocational units. However, he only makes this distinction in relation to written work as he concludes by indicating that all units have a “*practical piece*” too. This relates to the rationale for foundation degrees considered in Chapter Six, Section 6-4. The significance of this short response is that it shows a link between the discourses around a rationale for media studies (Chapter Five, Section 5-3) and the assessment practices within a course; the participant characterises some assessment methods as ‘*vocational*’ and others as not and so assessment practices can be seen as perpetuating and reinforcing a discourse of ‘*vocational*’/‘*academic*’ dichotomy.

I insisted to myself that there should be (...) a theoretical essay in this module, as apart from anything else (...) and not just a diary so I mean (...) I just thought there ought to be some writing. (Participant 17)

In some contrast, Participant 17 frames the relationship between assessment design and a vocational rationale rather differently. This participant moved into higher education teaching following a long career in journalism as a reporter and sub-editor, including working for national tabloid newspapers (*Appendix 1*), giving him a distinctive perspective on writing processes and written work. He associates the essay assessment type with the ‘*theoretical*’ aspects of media studies, a view that appears to be congruent with Participant 09’s view of ‘*reports*’ as ‘*vocational*’. But this participant is, consistent with his background, primarily concerned with the quality and depth of writing, distinguishing essays from assessment artefacts that are “*just a diary*”. So, with a background as a professional writer, this participant appears to see less of a distinction between the ‘*vocational*’ and the ‘*academic*’, at least in regard to assessment practices.

The responses of these two participants serve to problematise the relationship between a rationale for media studies and corresponding assessment practices. Rather than categorise assessment types according to how they might reinforce particular views of the rationale for media studies, there is value in considering the relationship between the subject and modes of assessment more holistically. Bragg’s (2000) critique of ‘*critical*’ media studies and the teaching, learning and assessment associated with that approach leads to deeper consideration of the role of assessment in learning and its effectiveness in evidencing that learning either tangibly or more implicitly. Her view is that practical work, whilst not unproblematic, is generally underestimated both as a learning activity and learning opportunity and as a tool for assessing students’ understanding of critical concepts and their applicability:

“...current epistemological models of media education overestimate the contribution of theory and explicit knowledge to learning and that practical as a strategy in media literacy teaching is both richer and more problematic than ideological critique... ..Intelligible and appropriate work in this mode can provide evidence of the creativity of implicit understanding derived from experience.” (Bragg, 2000, pp.49-50)

Participant 19, whilst quite dismissive of the formalities of assessment, is quite clear about what she considers to be the over-riding qualities that she looks for when assessing students:

Again, I don't care about grades, so long as people can show a...a visual imagination, and an ability to write, because there is no way you can work in the media [laughs] world without being able to write. So I just want to see two things: a visual imagination, an ability to write, and then you learn. (Participant 19)

Once again, the emphasis is on the quality of writing but this participant is also concerned with what she terms '*visual imagination*'. This phrase brings in a consideration of the visual aspects of the media and couples it with the idea of '*imagination*'— a term that appears to go beyond an assessment of the ability to understand and critically evaluate existing media artefacts to an assessment of a student's ability to apply those abilities constructively, creatively and innovatively.

Whilst setting out a framework for what should be assessed, the phrase “*I don't care about grades*” points to perceived difficulties in making that assessment in a way that would satisfy Wakeford's requirement that “*we need assessment to be accurate because it is pointless and unfair to students if it is otherwise*” (ibid.). This concern is echoed by other participants:

How do you judge this stuff, you know, what, what constitutes an A, a B, a C, a D? So the learning outcomes were very important to kind of make it very clear for both students and staff. (Participant 09)

Participant 09 speaks of the grading process in a way that conveys concerns, posed as a rhetorical question. His response then points to a need for a shared understanding of assessment between academic staff and students and suggests ‘*learning outcomes*’ as a vehicle for that. This is a conventional answer given the predominance of ‘learning outcomes’ or sometimes the more qualified ‘intended learning outcomes’ as part of a framework for documenting and prescribing learning within a modular or unitised approach to curriculum and course definition (Bell and Wade, 1993). The use of learning outcomes is prescribed through the *Quality Assurance Agency Quality Code* as an expectation of all applicable courses as part of a required programme specification:

“A programme specification is a concise description of the intended learning outcomes of a Higher Education (HE) programme, and the means by which the outcomes are achieved and demonstrated... ..These intended learning outcomes relate directly to the curriculum, study and assessment methods and criteria used to assess performance.” (Quality Assurance Agency, 2011, p.3)

Although mandatory across England through formal frameworks, the use of learning outcomes to define learning is not uncontested. Hussey and Smith provide a critique of learning outcomes grounded in a ‘*new managerialism*’ discourse (See Chapter Six, Section 6-3)

“...universities and colleges must not only be made to adopt modern management techniques to ensure efficiency, they must also be exposed to the latter-day elixir for all economic ills – the rigours of the market place. Educational institutions need a bureaucracy capable of managing themselves and able to respond to the external pressures for accountability... ..The new managerialism has created a situation in which the economic tail is vigorously wagging the educational dog.” (Hussey and Smith, 2002, p.221)

Hussey and Smith see learning outcomes as a tool for artificially partitioning and commodifying learning and as a means of ensuring accountability, quoting Marilyn Strathern:

“The language of indicators takes over the language of service. Or, to return to the audit process, the language of accountability takes over the language of trust.” (Strathern, 2000, p.314)

Their principal objections to learning outcomes are two-fold, their use as a means of managerially constraining and limiting learning and teaching, which they see as inherently wrong, but also that learning outcomes are ineffective in delivering this control and accountability as they:

“give the impression of precision only because we unconsciously interpret them against a prior understanding of what is required. In brief, they are parasitic upon the very knowledge and understanding that they are supposed to be explicating.” (Hussey and Smith, 2002, p.225)

These concerns are shared by others, particularly in relation to the assessment of creative practice (Orr, 2007; Orr and Bloxham 2012; Kleiman, 2005). Orr argues that learning outcomes are part of a positivist discourse of assessment that spuriously implies the existence and value of objectivity in assessment with terms such as ‘standards’, ‘bias’ and the ‘correct mark’. This contrasts with Wakeford’s assertion (see above) that “*we need assessment to be accurate*” as that implies that this positivist outcome is both achievable and desirable.

So whilst Participant 09 refers to learning outcomes as a starting point for assessment criteria that will lead to a classification of assessment artefacts according to a prescribed grading system there is some doubt that thinking and talking about assessment within a positivist discourse that includes ‘*learning outcomes*’ can effectively evidence and quantify the results of learning that

Participant 19 describes as '*visual imagination*'. Speaking of the assessment of creative practice in the context of art and design courses, Orr (2007, p.648) argues that "*assessment is a socially situated practice that is informed by, and mediated through, the sociopolitical context within which it occurs*". This view can be equally applied to the assessment of media artefacts and doing so provides an insight into the participant responses that sees assessment practices as a significant contributor to, and indicative of, the wider social practices that constitute media studies.

Summary and Conclusions

The analysis of participants' responses concerning assessment shows how media academic staff must continually negotiate the discourses of positivist assessment, creative practice and employability. As a significant activity for both academic staff and students it is notable that assessment was seen as a much greater issue by academic staff participants than it was by the graduate participants. Where graduates did mention assessment it was cursory and unproblematic and largely expressed in the terms of a positivist discourse. Students were more concerned with the value of practical media production work as a learning opportunity rather than its use as an assessment tool.

These conclusions can be used to revisit the assertion of Participant 19 that "*I don't care about grades*". The completion of formative tasks is valued by the participants as a pedagogic tool in media studies but they are uncomfortable with the discourses of summative assessment that are ultimately used as a means of labeling students as '*graduates*', or not.

6-6 Collegiality: “I’m sorry. I’m far too busy”

Introduction

“There is a powerful discourse of nostalgia, loss and golden ageism running through contemporary higher education literature. One lament is that current arrangements for quality assurance are in opposition to traditional collegiate practices for managing the academy.” (Morley, 2003, p.107)

The discourse of ‘*new managerialism*’ that is used to characterise, often negatively, the changes in higher education is framed here as a contrast to the view of higher education institutions as operating collegiately. Burnes *et al.* (2014) discuss collegiality in relation to universities at length whilst noting the difficulties in defining the term. They collate a variety of definitions ranging from “*collegiality merely as teachers conferring and collaborating with other teachers*” to “*professional equals governing their affairs through democratic procedures*” (ibid, pp.908-909).

In response to some prompts the five participants included in this section of the study made reference to the ways they work with others in their institution that give some insight into collegiate working within media studies. This shows that their practices are not wholly defined by either a dystopian ‘*new managerialism*’ or a utopian ‘*collegiality*’ discourse but show elements of both. This corresponds to Macfarlane’s (2014) view that:

“The collegiality-managerialism dichotomy is essentially a moral dualism. It evokes nostalgia for a lost era when academics, according to legend, were more in control of their own governance and where administrators (rather than managers) were benign figures who responded to the needs of academics rather than sought to exercise tight managerial authority over their day-to-day lives.”

Analysis

The responses of some participants show that their experiences of “*conferring and collaborating*” are not always positive. When asked about her experiences of the course design process as a newly-appointed member of academic staff, Participant 01 described both positive support from an individual but also disinterest from fellow academics:

There was a very nice person who sat down and went through the whole thing with me with words of one syllable, and at that point I began to just about cope. (Participant 01)

The academics were the ones who said, “I’m sorry. I’m far too busy. You’ll have to do it by yourself.” (Participant 01)

This leads to the consideration of a common but problematic term— ‘*course team*’:

Interviewer: What’s a course team then?

Participant 02: [...] I don’t know how to answer that.

This term is a common element of institutional process and procedure documentation and appears to be part of a ‘*collegiality*’ discourse and collective activity as envisioned within a ‘new *managerialism*’ institutional discourse (Drew and Vaughan, 2002). The following examples have been taken from university websites:

“The course team will be supportive of the needs of students...” (University of Central Lancashire website, 2012)

“The course team will attend the event in order to present...” (University of Sussex website, 2012)

“The course team will work with you to...” (Bishop Grosseteste University website, 2014)

The institutional course team quotes cited above suggests that ‘*course teams*’ have a tangible existence and are assigned specific roles to play in the practices of higher education. There is an implication that these activities are collegiate and there is a shared collective accountability for them. There is further reinforcement of this view from the recent discourses of ‘*student engagement*’ and ‘*students as partners*’ as student course representatives are increasingly seen as part of the ‘*course team*’ (Quality Assurance Agency, 2011b). However it is clear from the response of Participant 02 that his personal perception of ‘*course teams*’ does not match the institutional discourse presented above (“*I don’t know how to answer that*”). His response is carefully phrased to indicate, not that he does not know what a course team is or does not have an opinion on how they should operate. He appears to be reflecting on the difficulties of answering the question, given his position as a Director of Teaching and Learning with some accountability for the operation of course teams across the institution. This suggests that he is uncomfortable with the institutional discourse of ‘*course team*’ but recognises the significant presence of the term within the discourse.

Malcolm Tight (2010) has reviewed the literature covering UK academic workloads since the Second World War and concluded that although workloads have increased considerably over that time, most of that growth took place in the 1960s. However, Tight has identified the increase in administrative workload as the key factor in academics perceptions of workload:

“The growth in academic administration reflects the decreasing trust in academics on the part of their key funder, the state; yet, paradoxically, the increasing amount of time spent on it threatens the quality of the teaching and research it is meant to protect.” (ibid. p.214)

This may explain the mismatch in institutional and individual perceptions of the operation of course teams. Participant 02 does see the value of a ‘course team’ but only envisages it as a group of two or three people, the minimum possible size. His focus on “**actually** looking at and caring for” suggests that his perception is that course teams tend not to operate in this way and that they may just be Potemkin villages, designed to give the impression of collegiate activity and accountability for the purposes of institutional course approval, monitoring and review:

There really needs to be a core course team of two or three people who are actually looking at and caring for the educational experience of the students. (Participant 02)

Participant perceptions of collegiate working with academic colleagues varied and may be associated with the size and ethos of the institution they are working in.

Participant 04 is a part of a large department in a large post-92 university:

While having reasonable colleague-to-colleague relations, I didn’t necessarily find it easy to (...) discuss, let alone come to agreements (Participant 04)

His views contrast with the views of Participant 08 in a small specialist arts-based institution and Participant 10 in a specialised distance learning university:

The buck would stop if you were a course leader or a subject leader a bit more. But it was still pretty much a team effort, I would say. (Participant 08)

It’s the teams. So if you hit some triggers that you have below, we have you know, wherever we set our institutional averages at, if things fall below, two or three things fall below that it triggers this little process which we really hate. But actually it’s had some quite good results. ‘Cause it’s quite a collegiate process. (Participant 08)

On the whole we were quite good at collaboration in terms of writing those courses and things normally went through one, two, three classes, between all of us, but also we sat down often beforehand and, and tried to get a sort of idea of what everybody thought was important and then try from there to see what, what needed, what was crucial to say and I think that's probably the, the first part is, looking at what was absolutely crucial, what had to be there, what were the key elements that we wanted students to, to know and learn. (Participant 10)

These participants give an overall positive account of working together with Participant 08 indicating a negative view of the administrative quality procedures (*"this little process which we really hate"*) but valuing the collegiate working that they engage in to overcome these.

With a public discourse that portrays staff and students working in partnership (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011), the discourse of 'collegiality' can now be expanded to embrace the contribution of students to academic practices as outlined by Participant 01:

I wish I had spoken more to current students. I think that they would have had, when I was doing development work, I think they would have been... To me, the team, I understood was academics and it should have been. To me, that's, and now looking at it with hindsight and recognising how these things should work, I think it should be students, alumni, employers and all sorts. (Participant 01)

This participant expands the concept of collegiate working to encompass a much broader range of potential 'partners', a distinct alternative to a 'managerial', customer relationship with these other groups of professionals.

Summary and Conclusions

This picture that emerges of academic 'ways of working' is a complex one with institutionally-initiated structures of group working ('course teams') not proving

to be such a tangible entity as the discourse of academic leadership and management would suggest. Informal collegiate working is valued by individual academics but is necessarily dependent on the vagaries of personal relationships. Bolden *et al.* (2014, p.759) have studied academic communities and have similarly identified academic life as “*conflicted and ambiguous*”. In terms of oppositional discourses of ‘*new managerialism*’ and ‘*collegiality*’, the participants show how they exist in tension, capable of managing power relations across both discourses.

Although academic staff may consider that the balance of power is balanced in favour of institutional managerialism, throughout this study the responses of the senior manager (Participant 02, Director of Teaching and Learning at a post-92 university) did not display discursive practices that convey an impression of Foucauldian power even though his status in the hierarchy would suggest that he ‘possesses’ power. He appears no more assured of ‘getting things done’ than the lecturer participants, a challenge to the dystopian view of higher education taken by Collini (2012), Whelan *et al.* (2013) and Williams (2012a).

6-7 Two Worlds: “I call it reality”

Introduction

“There is, to begin with, the reification of ‘inside’ and ‘outside’. It is assumed that the only way to justify what goes on ‘inside’ is by demonstrating some benefit that happens ‘outside’. But we are none of us wholly ‘inside’ or ‘outside’ any of the institutions or identities which partly constitute who we are; these risk becoming misleading spatial metaphors.” (Collini, 2012)

One of the most striking elements of education discourse is the representation of education as one ‘world’ and everything else as a different ‘world’. Whilst education could be plausibly represented as an integral component of society with interactions at the level of both institutions and individuals, it is often portrayed as detached, irrelevant and lacking authenticity. There is education and then there is ‘*the real world*’. These examples are taken from the public sphere (researcher’s emphasis):

“And our high schools are populated with cynical kids who have learned, if they have learned anything, that they must jump through ridiculous, meaningless hoops if they ever hope to get **out there in the real world** where their **real education** can finally begin.” (‘Teacher Tom’ blog, 2014, researcher’s emphasis)

“...an education is often associated and used as a means to prepare for “**real life**” and what’s **out there in the real world**.” (mathsNews, 2014, researcher’s emphasis)

“But mostly we’re just trying to give these kids a good foundation in what painting is all about, so when they get **out there in the real world** and paint their kitchen they don’t make a total mess of it.” (Lockhart, 2009, researcher’s emphasis)

“I’m not so sure it makes any sense for people to spend three or four years of their life going through business school. The money that is spent doing that could be used to start a business and **get out there in the real world**.” (Preston, 2012, researcher’s emphasis)

“A cookie-cutter course list that involves several hours in the classroom **instead of out there in the real world** is simply incapable of preparing you with the tools you need to have success.” (CSA Learning Center, 2014)

“All the subjects that you think is hard right now in high school, trust me, it gets harder **out there in the real world**” (Carmelo Anthony in Ziegbe, 2010)

This ‘two worlds’ view of the place of education pervades not just the external representations of education but is also commonly featured in the way people embedded in education practices represent education. Waurechen laments this phenomenon in her article on assessment practices in higher education:

“I also just can’t buy into the “out there in the real world” ideology that dictates students should learn to deal with the occasional shitstorm that the world will throw their way, preferably sooner rather than later, because life has been “too damn cushy” for them up until now.” (Waurechen, 2014)

The participants in this study were not prompted to talk about this phenomenon directly but a significant number (eleven) of the participants chose to use this representation of education in their responses whether they are lecturers, course leaders, other education professionals or media graduates.

Analysis

This representation is crucial to an understanding of the discourses that characterise media studies and higher education because of the hierarchy and power it implies. If education is not part of the ‘real world’ then that implies that education practices are necessarily ‘unreal’. Education can then be portrayed as an ersatz process, subservient to a world ‘out there’ that is genuine, ‘real’ and so rightfully dominant. Eleven of the nineteen participants in this study made an unprompted reference in some way to a distinction between a media studies

education and the '*real world*'. These included participants from all the backgrounds represented in the study:

One of the things which impacts on the students' ability to get good quality jobs is having some real world experience (Participant 02)

The students are then introduced to the real world of filming and making films within their degree. (Participant 03)

When I was shuttling between the two worlds... (Participant 04)

When you get to the real world... (Participant 05)

But out there in the real world some people might just think... (Participant 08)

That you have developed certain skills (...) that (...) you can operate in a world out there (Participant 12)

...where you physically go out into the real world... (Participant 13)

...putting it into (...) s-some of your theory into practice. I call it reality. (Participant 13)

...in the (...) world that the students are going to go into (...) they need to... (Participant 15)

...huge tumult which (...) represents, reflects what's happening in the real world (Participant 17)

The prominent maintenance of this '*out there in the real world*' distinction when discussing media studies is more noteworthy than it might be for some other subjects given the nature of media studies as an interdisciplinary subject with its focus on a single, reasonable well-defined area of what is very much a part of the real world; the mass media. Whilst some other subjects are based around a single disciplinary approach or a particular canon, media studies is a subject explicitly formed around the mass media industries, a very '*real world*' human activity. So in media studies, '*out there in the real world*' is often a quite specific reference to the practices of the media industries or perhaps the broader creative industries rather than society as a whole. This narrower view of the '*real*

world' is clear from the responses of some participants and is often contracted to just *'the industry'*:

...if you look at it that way in terms of employability then they're serving (...) the industry. (Participant 14)

Participant 14 uses the term *'the industry'* when discussing employability and makes his perception of the hierarchy clear through his use of the word *'serving'* in relation to employability. Whilst the employability discourse (see Chapter Five, Section 5-5) is often centred on students, their development of particular skills and a discourse of individual *'empowerment'*, this participant sees it in terms of dominating industry requirements. Participant 06 expands on this relationship between media studies and the *'real world'* of the media industries:

Yes we go for the industry standard because as we said before we, we're, we are keen to encourage students who actually actively want to pursue this as a career. So then when they leave here they have what they need in order to apply for whatever vacancies, understand networks, contacts, have a solid show reel which they can say "Okay here's a factual TV show. Here's a film based DoP etc." and so on. So yes we apply the industry standards because that's where we've come from and we understand that's what is needed in order to apply and survive in the industry (Participant 06)

This participant gives a very clear picture of the way she sees the relationship between her course and the associated media industries. The basis of this relationship is derived from the experiences of the staff in professional practice within these industries prior to their appointment to academic posts in higher education (*"because that's where we've come from and we understand that's what is needed"*). She regards their previous professional practice experience as a validating qualification to prescribe what students *'need'*. This concept of what students need in order to be successful in the media industries is encompassed in

the term used twice in this participant quote, “*industry standard*”. The use of this term echoes its narrower usage in relation to technical standards within specific domains such as engineering. It alludes to highly specific and rigorously defined standards that emanate from organisations such as the British Standards Institute and the competitive endeavours of commercial organisations to establish their technology as a de-facto industry standard with the aim of being formally adopted as a defined and widely applicable standard across an industry segment (Hill, 1997). However, within the context of this participant response, that narrow technical definition is not what is intended. In this case it is more reasonable to interpret the participant’s use of the term ‘*industry standard*’ as ‘*prevailing industry practices*’ with the use of the word ‘*standard*’ implying a greater degree of certainty and uniformity than is probably the case. Phrasing this idea as ‘*industry standard*’ makes an assertion about the authority of these practices and precludes any discussion of the effectiveness of these practices, any variations across the creative industries and their overall value to creative industry practitioners or wider society.

This is consistent with a discourse of ‘*out there in the real world*’ that shapes participants’ thinking about the relationships between media studies and the creative industries. It militates against a dialogue between academia and industry that could address questions based around a consideration of what new graduates could offer the creative industries and the potential to challenge and improve prevailing industry practices.

Summary and Conclusions

“Theory is *about* something other. Practice is positioned as concrete, it is about what we do, and it is material. This (non-)dialogue is also reproduced in some of the discourses of research *and* practice, where research is located in the abstracted academy and practice is what goes on ‘out there’ in the ‘real world’. There is a separation performed in the very enactment of seeking to conjoin.” (Edwards, 2012, p.526, original emphasis)

Edwards’ philosophical consideration of the relationship between the academy and practice summarises the artificially constructed divide between media studies and the media industries evidenced through the discourse instantiated in the participant responses. By not being seen as part of the ‘*real world*’ within both internal and external discourses, media studies can document the media industries but never challenge and never change them.

6-8 Sector Variations: “Choking over their sherry”

Introduction

Nobody would find it surprising to have a Media Department, and even in, more long established universities, it's not uncommon and no longer a cause of people choking over their sherry in the senior common room. (Participant 04)

The theme considered in this analysis is the extent to which the factors considered across the study vary across the English higher education sector, as portrayed by the diversity of participants (seven included here) in the study, together with the participants' own perceptions of any sectoral variation.

In respect of the sectoral variations in participant responses to the main analytical themes, a striking feature is the lack of any clear variations across participants from different media studies settings. For example, a superficial and stereotypical view of varying rationales for media studies might expect the response of Participant 09 (course leader for a foundation degree in media production in an FE/HE college) to differ from that of Participant 15 (course leader for an honours degree journalism programme in a Russell Group university). However, this was not the case:

I think it's important in a (...) in a modern society, a modern democracy if you like – that people have the language to be able to deconstruct programmes that they see, to be able to kind of make rational decisions, to be active audiences if you like. (Participant 09)

We're thinking about (...) for instance the role of journalism in society. The effect of what- of what (...) how (...) journalism (...) i- works in practice on (...) how the world gets reported? (Participant 15)

Both participants are using the discourse of '*media literacy*'. The public differentiated discourses that associate '*media training*' with college-based foundation degrees and '*media education*' with Russell Group university honours degrees are not reflected in the participant responses here. The participants' view of any sectoral variation gives a more complex picture.

Analysis

Participant 08 relates the variations she has experienced in terms of cross-sector practice norms that she associates with the institutions she has experienced. She has worked in several large post-92 universities but is now an associate dean and head of department in a small specialist arts institution that employs lecturing staff who, according to Participant 08, see themselves as part-academic, part-creative industry practitioner and this leads her to differentiate between their identities and behaviours and those of the "*professional academic*":

In fact you meet them in their creative identity before you meet them as an academic here. It's really different [laughs]. And that's really hard to appreciate because you have expectations of how a professional academic behaves that you take with you from institution to institution that you go to, that are completely subverted here. And I don't mean that in a good way always either [laughs]. (Participant 08)

Participant 08 then explains the position of her institution in relation to the sector-wide approach to research, seeing that as different to general-purpose and research-intensive universities:

You know [laughs]. Erm, but actually, no the research agenda is, it's very, it's sensible for the size of the institution that we are. And we kind of value, enterprise as transfer, scholarship, those sorts of things. (Participant 08)

Because we put forward four and a half people for the whole institution or whatever. One of whom was at international level, the others who were, you know, a few rungs down. So we put a lot of work, spent a lot of money to be bottom of the table and so the conversation was like, “God, you know, would it have been better not to be in the club?”. (Participant 08)

This response problematises the engagement of her institution with the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). Due to the timing of the interview, the participant is referring to their previous submission to the RAE rather than the latest Research Excellence Framework (REF) (HEFCE, 2014). She perceives the RAE to have been incompatible with the practice-based work that predominates in her institution and presents this in terms of a discourse of league tables; “*a few rungs down*”, “*bottom of the table*” and represents universities who are successful in obtaining significant funding through the RAE as a “*club*” which implies exclusivity of membership and exclusion for her institution.

Participant 11 also points to the distinctive nature of his university which is also a small institution but with an explicit mission towards “social good” that is practically implemented through student voluntary work.

Well this place (...) this <Institution>, has a very overt (...) kind of a caring image. It’s formally a teacher training institution within the Cathedral Group of universities. Yeah. So they’re very much about being for social good and in their mission statement they go quite clearly for that compulsory element, whole degree or an optional element but it’s compulsory, it’s on the degree, is a volunteering module. (Participant 11)

Participant 11 does then go on to distinguish this from the way he perceives the Russell Group, giving an account that equates the whole Russell Group with a stereotype of Oxbridge and does not account for the significant diversity in

Russell Group members and does not fit the responses of the Russell Group participant in the study (Participant 15):

And a Russell Group's interpretation of universities who are training the brain to be an adaptable, we're training gentlemen for purposes if, for a, kind of a culture and things, it's why MA Oxford gives you an MA which you would of course have read more, once you'd graduated there [softly spoken]. So there is a whole class thing in there that you are, you know, would you argue that a PPE is vocational, from Oxford? Yes. (Participant 11)

This is then elaborated on to give a very full picture of the competitive environment for undergraduate student recruitment (likening it to a "call centre") that is clearly organised within a discourse of hierarchy; ("*bands*", "*top end*", "*ones below them*", "*further down the food chain*") that addresses the public policy discourses of 'core and margin' AAB recruitment and 'student number controls' (SNC) and sees additional students from a limited pool being recruited at the 'top end' and this then rippling through the '*hierarchy*':

I mean, I don't, I mean it's weird at the call centre, there isn't a single homogeneous higher education market by any means, I think it's slipped into quite distinct bands and you know, if you're Russell group, especially in the top end of the Russell group, you're not, you don't face any problems. What I have noticed is a place like Kings College have doubled their film studies student intake. To suck up all the AABs which means your Reading's, maybe your Birmingham's and your Swansea's I guess are suffering miserably because they've been all, had all their students sucked up. Whether that's going to keep going down. Well, I think they won't because it's the AAB's and it's the SNC that's going to hit the ones below them but they were relying on AABs to really bolster. Yeah, yeah. Whereas places like here, Beds and your Bournemouth's and your things like that, which are a little bit further down the food chain, well we won't get, we get a proportion of AABs, so it can be 15 to 20 %, particularly if you include HND and HNC. (Participant 11, note that this interview took place before the government announced that the SNC would be phased out.)

At the time of the interview, Participant 16 had recently moved from a university that was affiliated to the 1994 Group at the time to a university that is a member

of University Alliance (2014). This cannot be a neutral view of either university as the participant chose to move from one institution to the other and so would be likely to see the move as a positive one but it is a useful account of the perception of the transition for an individual:

I think, it's been (....) in the other kind of institution that I was in, I think there was a (...) it felt like there was a panic in that (...) we've tried to be this kind of, Russell Group place and we've not got into the sort of group and we've not been part of the Russell Group and so our research aspirations haven't quite been there and (...) we're having to find our money from somewhere else and don't get me wrong, I mean some, I had some fantastic teaching colleagues. But at the same time, there was an institutional panic and an institutional, we've got to get the money right? And it was all about money and there was, well there were lots of tick boxes about student experience and NSS <National Student Survey> but it was (...) I don't know, there was something missing, if you like. And then I've come here and there is just a, students are genuinely involved and genuinely integrated and sure, there's a panic about applications and stuff like that, but I think the students that are here, are genuinely cared about, (...) kind of, it's really difficult to put my finger, it's so different. It felt so instrumental and so individual, very neo-liberal and in here, it's very collective, supportive and communal, it's quite a drastic difference. (Participant 16)

This does give a picture of institutional and academic cultures, practices and discourses that can vary between institutions. The Russell Group is again seen as a dominant feature of the account of the former institution with a position just outside it seen as undesirable and unsustainable. This is related to the levels of research funding obtainable through the RAE/REF. There is distinction drawn between the institution (“*panic*”, “*we’ve got to get the money*”) and immediate academic colleagues (“*fantastic*”). The current institution is seen as more collegiate and more student-focussed, and these are both seen as positive factors.

Participant 19 had also recently changed institution from University B to University A:

<University A> does it better than <University B>, partly because it has such lousy equipment. If you have really poor equipment, then you start concentrating on, what can we do with the ideas? [Laughs]. And it really does; I mean, I think it is quite successful in the way it pushes ideas and develops them. (Participant 19)

Again, the move is viewed positively but the affirmative account of the conceptual elements of the curriculum is tempered by a cynical rationale based on resources and suggests, when considered alongside her responses to other themes, that she sees the practical production work as an important differentiator between institutions.

Summary and Conclusions

The participant responses here show that there is a broad, overt recognition of the differences between institutions delivering media studies across the sector. There is some recognition of an institutional hierarchy dominated by the Russell Group but in terms of media studies specifically, participants give very similar (or at least uncorrelated with an institutional hierarchy) accounts of what media studies means to them. This may be due to the strength of media studies outside the Russell Group and its relatively recent introduction to the academy as a distinct subject.

This analysis concludes the consideration of the discourses of academic practice that form this chapter. The analyses have revealed connections between the discourses of identity in the previous chapter and the ways these influence the discursive practices that constitute academic practices in media studies. These

practices are revealed as holding oppositional discourses in tension but illustrate the ways that academic practitioners actively manage those tensions to maintain their conceptualisation of media studies as a subject.

Chapter Seven

Data Analysis – Media Studies - Discourses of Public Policy

7-1 Introduction

This final analysis chapter is a consideration of the participant responses in relation to ‘*media studies*’ and a number of contemporary public policy issues that impact higher education, discourses of ‘public policy’. Over recent decades higher education public discourse has been dominated by a shift towards ‘*the market*’ and ‘*student as consumer*’ together with a portrayal of higher education primarily as a driver of economic growth rather than a broader contributor to society (for example, Fairclough (1993), Molesworth *et al.*, 2009). This chapter addresses the contemporary manifestations of this discourse and so contributes to a response to research question two (See Chapter One, Section 1-7).

The bulk of this chapter looks at the ways the participants perceive the impact of marketised, competitive recruitment and admissions activities in relation to the practices of ‘*media studies*’. There is then a consideration of the participants’ responses to discourses of ‘*student experience*’ and ‘*students as partners*’ in response to central government policy developments such as *Students at the Heart of the System* (Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011).

The analyses in this chapter take account of responses from fifteen of the nineteen participants, covering all the broad roles within the interviewees; media studies academic staff, central university professional staff, media studies graduates and the secondary school headteacher.

7-2 Recruitment and Admissions: “Because it’s much more fun”

Introduction

This theme relates to the exploration of the rationale for media studies courses investigated in Chapter Five, Section 5-3. Both academic staff, media graduates and applicant advisors gave their views on the relationships between the courses offered and the reasons prospective students might have for choosing a course. The inter-play between the ways in which academic staff see media studies and the ways in which students and their advisors perceive these courses provides some insight into the discourses of media studies. The responses from eight participants are considered here. When combined with the official materials produced by institutions as part of the recruitment and admissions process the discursive practices begin to emerge. Comparing the ways in which university promotional materials describe courses with the ways university staff and prospective students perceive those courses can reveal the tensions in the provision of media studies courses. This approach relates to and builds on the work of Fairclough (1993, p.133) on university advertisements:

“a text-based examination of the marketization of discursive practices as a process which is pervasively transforming public discourse in contemporary Britain, with particular reference to higher education.”

A striking feature of Fairclough’s work is the way it demonstrates that the angst within higher education concerning the crossing of a line into a ‘*free market*’ has been an issue for debate for over twenty years. Fairclough’s paper is located around the time that the Further and Higher Education Act (1992) was implemented, abolishing the binary divide between universities and polytechnics

and the creation of 'Post-92' universities. This time of significant structural change can be compared to the funding changes introduced by the 2010 coalition government with each being seen, negatively by some people, as heralding a move towards a free market in higher education. This negative view of marketisation has been articulated as:

"...parts of British higher education are pedagogically constrained by the marketisation that has accompanied its expansion. Given that universities once aimed to change the student's intellectual perspective on the world, we use Fromm's humanist philosophy to argue that the current market discourse promotes a mode of existence where students seek to 'have a degree' rather than 'be learners.'" (Molesworth et al., 2009, p.278)

Analysis

For a contemporary analysis of the ways universities use their web sites to promote their media courses to prospective undergraduate students it is useful to consider a range of courses across distinctive institutional settings (discussed below) to capture the richness and diversity of provision across the sector:

"The BA Communications and Media is a challenging academic programme that will provide you with the analytical tools to study and understand the social, cultural and political role of the communications and media industries. This degree offers an exciting and contemporary approach to communications in one of the leading departments of its kind, known for its excellence in teaching and research." (University of Leeds website, 2014)

"This is a unique course, built on our long tradition of teaching interdisciplinary media practice, working across moving image, photography and interactive media. Our approach combines the creative exploration of art school traditions with academic and professional excellence." (University of Westminster website, 2014)

"Our BA (Hons) Film and Television Production course is designed to equip you with a range of skills that enable you to operate effectively in the professional environment of television and film production. Guided by our highly experienced teaching staff, many of whom are practising professionals in the industry, you will explore a range of styles and genres in documentary and film-fiction production." (Anglia Ruskin University website, 2014)

These opening statements from the course description pages, aimed at prospective undergraduate students, illustrate the ways in which different institutions choose to promote their media courses. These three examples can be related to the institutions' perception of themselves and the position they occupy in the higher education sector. In their 2009 strategic plan the University of Leeds, a member of the Russell Group, state their purpose:

“As a research-intensive international university with a strong enduring reputation we strive to: create, advance and disseminate knowledge; develop outstanding graduates and scholars; make a major impact upon global society.” (University of Leeds, 2009)

The description of the course at Leeds echoes the way in which the institution sees itself with an emphasis on research excellence and making a link between the departmental research environment and the course with the words “*exciting*” and “*contemporary*”. The course is described as providing “*analytical tools*” directed towards the “*social, cultural and political role*” of the media. This is combined with an emphasis on academic challenge and makes no mention of preparation for a career or meeting the needs of employers. This course has advertised entry requirements of AAB at A2 Level (equivalent to 340 UCAS tariff points) (University of Leeds, 2014) with an actual modal entry profile of 320-359 UCAS tariff points (with a spread from 280-319 to 560-599) in 2010-12 (Unistats, 2014) that, for UK-based entrants is likely to represent students entering with qualifications at both AS and A2 level; students with high attainment at GCSE level often study four or five subjects at AS level during Year 12 of the UK school system before concentrating on three of these at A2 level during Year 13. With a target recruitment of relatively high tariff applicants,

Leeds chose to highlight the academic and personal development aspects of their offering together with language that echoes some of the participant responses when asked to outline a rationale for media studies courses. There is no mention of future career development and employability in this paragraph. It cannot be assumed that this implies that these elements are of no concern however. An alternative reading could be that the institution's track record and self-confidence lead it to believe that potential applicants will assume that they will be successful in starting and developing their career. This could be due to both their perception of the way Russell Group universities are viewed by employers (Chevalier and Conlon, 2003) and their own existing successes within the education system that have led them to the point of applying for high entry-tariff courses.

The course description from the University of Westminster is also indicative of the institutional context. Here the initial statement draws attention to the longevity ("*long tradition*") of the course, referring to the original UK media studies course that was launched at the Polytechnic of Central London, a forerunner of Westminster, in 1975. Attention is then drawn to an interdisciplinary approach. In this case *interdisciplinary* is viewed as a consideration of multiple media forms and practices ("*moving image, photography and interactive media*") rather than multiple theoretical approaches. Care is then taken to position the course as a combination of "*creative exploration of art school traditions with academic and professional excellence*" with the implication that art schools are *creative* but not naturally *academic* nor concerned with *professional excellence* and that Westminster can bring these things together. This view of art schools

relates to Boyd-Davis' (2000, p.66) characterisation of "art school traditions" as "anti-intellectual". He goes on to elaborate:

"The very emphasis on practical experience in preference to second-hand knowledge, which is a strength of the art school, militates against effective use of written knowledge. It is as if *everything* must be discovered first hand in order to be valid." (ibid.)

It is this approach that distinguishes much (but not all) of media studies from courses in art and design that are primarily focussed on art studio practice. This is an area of overlap though with art and design courses containing elements of media practice that, at least in technologies of production, mirror the practice-based mass media production in some media studies courses. Westminster are using their promotional material to position their course between the practice-based and practice-led courses associated with art schools and the critical theory-led courses associated with humanities courses in universities. The positioning allows the Westminster course to be promoted on the basis of *creativity* and *academic and professional excellence*. This final element of *professional excellence* does allude to potential graduate career opportunities and can be seen as distinctive from the implied graduate success of the Leeds promotional material. The advertised (University of Westminster, 2014) entry requirements for the Westminster course are BB/BCC at A2 Level (200-260 UCAS Tariff points) with an actual modal entry profile of 280-319 UCAS points (with a spread from 200-239 to 440-479) for students starting the course in 2010-12 (Unistats, 2013a).

The final promotional paragraph is taken from a course description from Anglia Ruskin University and this shows their very clear commitment to the

development of practice-based skills and professional practice. As part of their Corporate Plan 2012-14, Anglia Ruskin put an emphasis on employability within the curriculum:

“Ensure that when we design our curriculum, thought is given to how we maximise the employability of students following it – recognising that academic staff have the greatest influence over student career choice.” (Anglia Ruskin University, 2012)

This corporate statement shows that Anglia Ruskin sees employability as the most important aspect of the course to promote to prospective students and signals that it is an embedded, explicit aspect of current design (“...when we design our curriculum, thought is given to how...”) rather than an implicit outcome of completing an undergraduate degree. This approach is followed through in the course promotional paragraph by emphasising that the skills developed are applicable to professional practice in the specific media industry areas of television and film production. This is reinforced by making a link between the media industry experience of the teaching staff and the development of these skills.

The published entry requirements for the Anglia Ruskin course are 200-240 UCAS tariff points (Anglia Ruskin, 2014) with an actual 2010-12 modal entry profile of 280-319 tariff points with a spread of entry qualifications from less than 120 to 400-439 (Unistats, 2014).

Whilst considering just three courses, their institutional contexts and their entry qualification profiles is not a comprehensive survey of admissions to media courses, but it does serve to illustrate the diversity of provision and provides a

context for the participant responses in this area. The evidence from the three courses considered above does suggest that there is a relationship between institutional context, entry qualifications profile and the ways in which the course is promoted to prospective students. It appears from this that employability and graduate career outcomes are more explicitly promoted by institutions and courses with lower typical entry qualification profiles whilst high tariff courses are promoted by linking to the academic research environment and leaving career outcomes as implicit.

Participant 05 (a media graduate now working in the television industry) did consult the university's promotional materials (in printed form rather than online as he entered higher education before online materials were commonly available) but he places greater emphasis on the influence of personal contact with a member of university staff specifically tasked with recruiting students.

...it was two things, firstly I saw the prospectus, it worked [laughter]. Obviously, the printed prospectus. I think that was before the days of digital prospectuses to be fair [laughter]. Yeah it was a printed prospectus. And <name>, who was the university recruitment officer, he came to our college and talked to a few people, and I was chatting to him, and then I came on an open day, and I wasn't too impressed with the accommodation, the facilities team were nice, and the TV facilities were nice. And also that's, because media production wasn't based in a TV studio at all, and TV production was. That's part of the reason why I sort of came here, because I wasn't based in a studio at all, whereas I felt that with TV production, you were actually doing more physical hands on jobs. (Participant 05)

This participant also cites the available facilities as an influencing factor. Access to facilities was a factor in this student's decision to change courses on arrival at the university (Media Production to Television Production) as his perception was that the Television Production course provided access to the better facilities.

None of his response relates to either intellectual development or career opportunities that are typically foregrounded in institutional promotional materials.

This broader range of influential factors is echoed by Participant 02 (a Director of Teaching and Learning) with his indirect view that students' choice of course and university are influenced by what he sees as "*more prosaic factors*" that again do not relate to either intellectual development or career opportunities.

I suspect if you looked at it much more closely, the reasons they have for going and choosing a university have very little to do with quality; the perceived nature of the educational experience when they get there. The factors which are more important are, [laughter] other rather more prosaic factors like, you know, what's the sporting equipment like? Is there a gym? Are there clubs and societies I can join? How far away is it from home? Er, those sorts of things (Participant 02)

Participant 04 points to what he sees as the accessibility and attractiveness of media as a choice for prospective students and conveying something of his passion for the subject ("*it's much more fun than any other subject out there*") and contrasts media studies with history as a subject choice for prospective undergraduates:

I mean, in a way, the question I always want to ask is, 'Why doesn't everyone want to do Media because it's much more fun than any other subject out there?' Erm, (...) so you know, in theory, we should be better off than many other subjects. The bigger puzzle, I suppose, I mean, I love History and I think History is really important but it is at times hard to work out why a young person would want to do History. (Participant 04)

According to UCAS (2013) data, the number of applications from eighteen year olds for courses in Group V Historical and Philosophical Studies fell by 2.0 per cent between 2010 and 2013 whilst the number of applications from eighteen

year olds for courses in Group P Mass Communications and Documentation fell by 8.1 per cent and in Group W Creative Arts and Design by 3.6 per cent over the same period (UCAS, 2013). Recognising that all these UCAS groupings contain subjects other than history and media studies, this differential decline in relative popularity in application terms provides the context for the “puzzle” posed by the participant. The period covered by this UCAS data reflects outcomes of an evolving discourse following the 2008 UK financial crash as the role of the financial services industry in the UK economy came under question and the relative decline of UK manufacturing industry was considered a cause for concern. For example:

“Why doesn't Britain make things any more? In the past 30 years, the UK's manufacturing sector has shrunk by two-thirds, the greatest de-industrialisation of any major nation. It was done in the name of economic modernisation – but what has replaced it?” (The Guardian, 16 November 2011)

The Perkins *Review of Engineering Skills*, published in 2013 by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills is an example of government policy work that raised the profile of STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) subjects and represents the public sphere discourse around rebalancing the economy away from a reliance on financial services:

“To maintain and enhance this position, and the quality and capacity of the engineering HE system, future investment in facilities, and strong engagement by industry and the profession will be essential. In addition, the industry and profession need to focus on both the stock of ‘potential’ engineers in the workforce, and ensuring that those who have been inspired from a young age to become engineers do not fall to temptations from elsewhere in our economy.” (Perkins, 2013, p.42)

The phrase “*ensuring that those who have been inspired from a young age to become engineers do not fall to temptations from elsewhere in our economy*” is significant as it

suggests that there should be a role for the industry and profession in manipulating the supply of graduates in particular subjects in contrast to the government's approach in its *Students at the Heart of the System* White Paper (Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011) which uses phrases such as "a more market-based approach" (p.73), "makes student-choice meaningful" (p.5) and "student choice drives competition" (p.19). Perkins' reference to "*temptations from elsewhere in our economy*" can also be read as a veiled reference to perceived salary differentials highlighted by press coverage of 'bankers' bonuses' (For example, "*Expect fireworks as bankers' bonuses rocket*" (Watkins, 2014))

It is in this climate that the changing patterns of applications to undergraduate courses should be viewed; over the same 2010-2013 timescale, applications for Group F Physical Sciences rose by 14.9 per cent and Group H Engineering by 8.6 per cent (UCAS, 2013).

So the "puzzle" within Participant 04's response can be related to the recent changes in application levels with the traditional and conventional academic subjects contained with Group V Historical and Philosophical Studies fairing better than Group P media courses and Group W art and design courses, despite these being more overtly related to the expanding creative industries sector of the economy (see Chapter One) and better accessibility through their relevance to popular culture ("*much more fun than any other subject*").

Participant 08 (Head of Media in a small specialist arts-based institution) puts considerable emphasis on the role a portfolio of practice-based work plays in the admissions process for their courses:

We wouldn't let them in the door without a portfolio, [laughs] for example. (Participant 08)

Despite this unequivocal commitment to the use of portfolios and interviews as part of the admissions process, the participant elaborates on this and refers to what she sees as significant problems with this process:

Back to portfolio, actually back to not so much the work, 'cause the work actually sort of stands for itself. The actual dialogue between interviewer and interviewee. And about cultural capital and assumptions made about someone's exposure to culture, you know so if you want someone who has been to all these galleries and done all this stuff and seen all these films and read all these books, you might make a decision, if they haven't, they are not suitable for the course. And, of course, actually if you dig a bit deeper you might find out it's because of their social background. (Participant 08)

Similar concerns are also voiced by Participant 16 (Course Leader at a Post-92 university):

I think the widening participation agenda has been problematic more widely because I mean what happened at the start was that, you know, there's this great egalitarian ethos and then what happens is you just get more middle class thick kids who think, "I deserve a degree" and umm, it didn't recruit the students that it was aimed at. (Participant 16)

The response of Participant 08 can be seen as an example of the ways in which the original thrust of widening participation has been dissipated through the impact of some higher education practices. Participant 16 saw widening participation as consistent with a "*great egalitarian ethos*" stemming from the policies of the Blair government to increase age-group participation in higher education to fifty per cent by 2010. The intention was to increase the

participation in higher education from under-represented groups but over the course of its implementation, progress towards this target was achieved with greater participation from groups already well-represented in the student population (referred to by Participant 16 pejoratively as “*middle class thick kids who think, I deserve a degree*”) rather than solely increased participation from under-represented groups (Burke, 2013; Jones, 2008). Participant 08 provides some insight into the ways in which this can occur. Her response refers to the common practice amongst art and design oriented departments of asking course applicants to visit the department, bring a portfolio of their own creative practice and, probably as one of a number of activities, participate in an interview with members of academic staff where the lecturers will look at the applicant’s portfolio, discuss it and ask more general questions about the applicant’s background, experience, knowledge, their expectations of the course and their career aspirations. The characterisation of this process as an ‘interview’ sends a message that this is a selection process and that the decision as to whether to offer the applicant a place on the course will be made on the basis of their performance and so puts pressure on the applicant to perform well according to their perception of the criteria being used by the interviewers. By emphasising the selective nature of the activity the value of the place is signalled to the applicant. However, with strict student number controls in place over recent years, departments may be balancing the need to recruit a specific number of students within a very narrow band against a professional judgement of whether the course is suitable for any particular applicant. Both under-recruitment and over-recruitment can have financial consequences for a department.

Participant 08 see problems with this process and with no suggestion that the interviewers would deliberately set out to favour particular groups of applicants, she is uncomfortable with the selection aspect of the interview (*“you might make a decision, if they haven’t, they are not suitable for the course. And, of course, actually if you dig a bit deeper you might find out it’s because of their social background.”*). This unease stems from the criteria (*“if you want someone who has been to all these galleries and done all this stuff and seen all these films and read all these books”*) which are seen as measures of “*cultural capital*” (a term associated with Bourdieu (1990)), that are based on “*assumptions made about someone’s exposure to culture*”.

Jackie McManus’ study of interview practices in art and design courses also identifies:

“the view of knowledge, ability and talent found in the admissions process in the art and design academy, which persists in framing selection interviews around what are seen as legitimate forms of cultural capital.” (McManus, 2006, p.81)

Both McManus and Participant 08 use the term “*cultural capital*” to describe the attributes of potential students that are privileged by conventional admissions interviews. McManus takes care to note that the issue is not around a lack of applicants’ cultural capital but rather that the interview process is based on a limited view of what constitutes “legitimate forms of cultural capital”. The term ‘cultural capital’ derives from Bourdieu’s work on *habitus*; “*the product of social-conditionings and thus of history*” (Bourdieu, 1990, p.116) and, according to Lamont and Lareau (1988, p.153), has “*come to assume a large number of, at times, contradictory meanings*”. They note the use of the term *cultural capital* to encompass ideas such as the knowledge of high culture, high educational

attainment, “*the symbolic mastery of practices*” or the “*capacity to perform tasks in culturally acceptable ways*”. These can all be seen to relate to the admissions interview process as an explanation for the participant’s unease. When describing the purpose of an admissions interview to prospective students the institutional description typically emphasises a focus on motivation and commitment rather than cultural capital. For example:

“Interviews are an opportunity for you to demonstrate to us your self-motivation and commitment to your area of study.”
(Arts University Bournemouth website, 2014)

This mismatch between the published intended focus of an admissions interview and the implicit criteria is an issue for the departments that have a culture and tradition of selecting students through a face-to-face mechanism. Many departments offering media studies courses do not use interviews as part of a selection and admissions process. Seeing the interview as a barrier to participation, they put the emphasis on providing prospective students with as much information about the course as possible, and, crucially, providing ‘taster’ experiences that provide the prospective student with an opportunity to self-evaluate their suitability for the course. Participant 09 (Course leader for a foundation degree in an FE/HE college) puts the emphasis on providing prospective students with opportunities to experience the production facilities available to students as a way of promoting applications and allowing students to decide whether the course is the right opportunity for them:

Students do come to us because they want to have an experience of, you know working in ... they know this is not a television station but they want to have an experience of what it might be like to work in a television ... so we have the three cameras set up in the room we’re in and we’ve got studio down there lights and I think, I think for

some institutions they'll say yeah we'll invest that money and it does mean laying out some money at the beginning. (Participant 09)

League tables are a significant element of higher education public discourse and their production and analysis form a regular source of media representations of higher education. The advent of increasing amounts of publically-available data has resulted in a range of league tables that appear to offer an objective view of the relative merits of various institutions but, through the use of differing datasets and by combining them in different ways, league tables are an important part of the political discourses of higher education (Amsler and Bolsmann, 2012). Underpinning these public discourses is an assumption that market-led competition is best served by providing readily comparable indicators of the quality of education offered by providers and that applicants will use this information to make a rational choice when applying to institutions, an approach that underpins *Students at the Heart of the System* (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011) and discussed in Chapter Seven, Section 7-3 in relation to the advice prospective applicants receive and Chapter Seven, Section 7-5 as an element of the 'student satisfaction' discourse. The research literature does not support this assumption. Gibbons et al. (2013, p.3) show that league tables have a disproportionate effect "*on the most able students and for courses in the upper-middle entry standard tariff group, whereas the effect for the elite Russell Group of universities does not differ from other universities*".

This view is supported by the participant responses. Participant 13 (secondary school headteacher) confirms that only high-attaining students consider league tables as a factor when making application choices:

I would say the vast majority are not looking at league tables, I would say that some of them who've got a lot of choice in terms of their grades and where the courses they want to do and you know they're your real top end, then I would say some of them are definitely looking at the league tables. (Participant 13)

But she goes on to confirm that her school takes their students' university applications extremely seriously and seeks to support them where there is a perceived competition for places:

I'm a great believer in giving our students whatever edge is possible to get these places (Participant 13)

This is echoed by Participant 15 (Russell Group Course Leader) who, speaking at a time of unrestricted recruitment of AAB students but capped recruitment at lower tariffs, recognises that her university and journalism course have to compete very hard with other similar institutions to recruit students whose grades bring them a significant amount of choice:

Well (...) students who come here are very well- very aware of the competitive nature of the, the entrance process to get into this course that you have to be (....) you know you have to be achieving high A levels and those students really (...) could do anything with their (...) their (...) their choices of what degrees to go on and so (...) I suppose (...) i-it's very clear to them that the type of (...) degree that they're going to be taking isn't just a training course and if they want that they should go somewhere else (...) because (...) we make it explicit to them in open days and in all our literature. (Participant 15)

Her pitch to these students is that the degree that they are offering “*isn't just a training course*” echoing the discourses of ‘employability’ and ‘media training’.

Summary and Conclusions

Taken together with the examples of public materials, the participants' responses demonstrate some of the variations in discursive practices across the sector as

institutions position their media studies courses in relation to the key aspects of a rationale for the subject. The responses show a consistency with the institutional representations of media studies to applicants but question the ways some selection processes have the potential to exclude some applicant groups more than others.

The institutional discourses explored here conform to a hierarchy of institutions that is reinforced by the presentation of subjective judgements as objective metrics through league tables. With media studies provision clustered into certain types of institution (See Chapter One), this leads to a distinctive picture of media studies recruitment and admission discursive practices that reflect the historical development of the subject and the tensions in the rationale for the subject explored in Chapter Five.

7-3 Advisors: “He said, how about media?”

Introduction

I think it depends upon what messages that they are getting at home from the family. (Participant 13)

Over the time I was at <university name> I saw a massive change and suddenly it's a sea of parents isn't it? (Participant 10)

This analysis considers the participant responses in relation to the ways potential students seek and act on advice from others before selecting a media studies course and higher education institution and making an application. This aspect of the admissions process has become increasingly significant with institutions noting a growing number of friends and families attending open day events alongside prospective students (Lepkowska, 2011). This is often attributed to the 2012-13 rise in tuition fees and changes to the student loan system (ibid.) which whilst securing the debt against the students' future income, also takes account of family income when setting the maximum amount a student may borrow as a maintenance loan (HM Government, 2014). This anomaly appears to signal an expectation that families will contribute to the overall cost of studying the course.

The significance of family and other influencers was recognised in the government's *Students at the Heart of the System* (Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011) as part of the rationale for increasing the public data requirements of higher education providers:

“We will ask the main organisations that hold student data to make detailed data available publicly, including on employment and earnings outcomes, so it can be analysed and presented by private organisations in a variety of formats to meet the needs of students, their parents and other advisors.” (ibid, p.6)

Without making it explicit, this requirement also makes a commitment to supporting commercial organisations in the production of league tables, a much discussed element of public discourse that may impact on prospective student decision making although their direct impact may not be as high as providers sometimes assume (Slack et. al., 2012 p.217).

On this basis, a consideration of three of the participants' perceptions of this phenomenon can contribute to an understanding of the ways public discourses around fees and loans intersect with the practices enacted by the participants.

Analysis

The analysis here considers this three-way relationship (student, advisor and course lecturer) from each of these perspectives. The participants were prompted to talk about their experiences of the impact of parental and other advice on student decision-making. Some participants are media studies graduates recalling their own experiences; others are academic staff who have been involved in the admissions process. Participant 13 is the headteacher of a non-selective Eleven-Eighteen state secondary school (academy) with experience of advising Year Twelve and Year Thirteen pupils as they apply for higher education or leave to pursue employment or other education/training routes.

These first participant responses demonstrate some of the implicit criteria that are being deployed in making a decision to study a media course. Participant 03, a media studies graduate, relates a fairly informal discussion with a career advisor:

I went to see a careers advisor and they asked me what subjects did I really enjoy? And I said, “Well, the one particular one,” was designing models and photography and photography especially. And they said, “Well, how about you consider then going into (...) a degree within media? ...and I said, “Well, what do you suggest?” And when we got round to it, he said, “How about media?” and that’s how we came to that... ...I’ve never looked back. (Participant 03)

This conversation is based on a decision-making process centered on preference and enjoyment of the subject (*“what subjects did I really enjoy”*) and then a suggestion that the participant should consider studying media. In this response the participant makes no reference to any consideration of his aptitude for the subject or to a discussion of what the outcomes might be in terms of employment or further education/training. However, this participant graduated in 2003 and so probably applied for university entry in 1999 making him liable for the £1000 per year tuition fees introduced in 1998 but not part of the cohorts that paid £3000 per year from 2004 or £9000 per year from 2012. This is in contrast to the response from Participant 13 describing her experiences of advising potential applicants under the current arrangements:

(...) I mean in the end we don’t (...) we don’t advise them to do anything we just...make them think- “make sure you’ve thought through your choices at the end.” (...) Y-you have to turn round, I mean some, some of the highest employment is in history graduates I think, isn’t it? And actually English literature...and we’ve already said to him “that’s fine but it will be on a course that actually you know is going to mean he’s got a better chance of employment at the end...you can choose what you like but! (Participant 13)

This response shows much greater concern for the instrumental value of the degree and whilst making it clear that the applicant makes the final decision, the emphasis is on employment outcomes. However, she demonstrates that she looks carefully at data regarding graduate destinations rather than making any assumptions. This does correspond to the discourses identified around the

current arrangements for student finance discussed in Chapter Seven, Section 7-4.

The next response from Participant 13 graphically demonstrates some of the pressures on both applicants and their advisors at the point where they receive their FHEQ Level 3 results and discover whether they have fulfilled the requirements of their conditional entry offer from their first choice institution:

...and we were there just trying to pick up the pieces...whereas at least now sometimes they're coming in and they already know they've not got in (angry) (...) so from our point of view and we know they've not got in...so we're ready (angry) we- we have certain people who when they walk through the door all the staff are ready- ...and we know which ones, you know as I say staff are ready so that- you know the- okay they go open their envelope, going to have a look (...) but there'll be a member of staff pretty (angry) close nearby...and we are getting them straight over to Connexions 'cause Connexions will be there. (...) So you can sort of do that already Urm but yeah the- it is, it's a bit easier if they know they're not going. (happy) [slight laugh] It- it's just so sad watching these people, these children just disintegrate in front of you. You know this is what they've worked towards the last two years and all of this and then you know (softly spoken) but then you get those that are absolutely delighted. (Participant 13)

From an institutional point of view, admissions can become a macro process of meeting multi-level recruitment targets from an institutional level down through Faculty and Departmental targets to individual courses with budgets contingent on meeting them (See Chapter Seven, Section 7-2). This participant response demonstrates the impact of these macro admissions decisions on individual students. Despite prolonged policy discussions and consultations, initiated by the New Labour government in 2006 following the recommendations of the Schwartz Report (2004, p.44) and a report by Sir Alan Wilson (2005) that considered the implementation implications, a move to post-qualification

applications by 2012 (BBC, 2006) has made little progress. Most students still receive conditional entry offers and must then wait for the results of their FHEQ Level 3 studies to be released, just a few weeks before their proposed course starts. If they fail to meet the conditional offer or exceed it by a significant margin then they face the prospect of still registering at their first choice institution if they will accept them, accepting their second choice insurance offer or entering the UCAS Clearing process that matches unplaced students with unfilled places.

Participant 13 then proceeds to a picture of the scope of the advice students seek before making an application:

I think some forget to ask their parents how they're actually going to get to and from (...) you know [slight laugh] they haven't actually thought about that side of it, you know (happy) [slight laugh] parents having to take days off work to go and collect them and things like that. (Participant 13)

Whilst institutions may spend a significant amount of time and energy in carefully honing their '*proposition*' and '*verbal brand strategy*' to appeal to prospective students, this response suggests that practical issues such as the location of an institution relative to the student's home are the concerns of their advisors. Her perception is that only the Russell Group have sufficient presence within the public discourse to have any impact on students' and their parents' decision making process ("*will listen to this and think it must be true*"):

It's the messages that we are getting so, you know and those are the messages that parents are listening to and students are listening to and what they hear on the news, you know and if- what the Russell Group Universities are saying (...) you know (softly spoken) and it- because in the end their parents will listen to those and think well it must be true. (Participant 13)

Summary and Conclusions

These responses give some insight into the individual experiences of students entering the higher education sector. Oppositional discourses, discursive practices and public policy can appear as esoteric macro phenomena but the underlying social practices impact profoundly on individuals and their future lives (*“it's just so sad watching these people, these children just disintegrate in front of you”*, Participant 13). This demonstrates the significance of understanding the impact of higher education and the ways in which it is changing. The discourse of ‘consumer power’ does not appear to be reflected in the experiences of all.

7-4 Tuition Fees: “I think everyone is quite nervous”

“As universities and colleges are forced to operate in commercial terrain, it is basic business imperatives that come to the fore. Our habits of thought about higher education are no longer appropriate for this terrain.”
(McGettigan, 2013, p. ix)

Introduction

The fieldwork for this study took place between November 2011 and November 2013. This section considers the participant responses over this period in relation to the public discourses around student finance. At the start of the interviewing period, higher education institutions were coming towards the conclusion of the main application period for entry to courses commencing in September 2012, the first year of the new fees regime. At that time the impact on student recruitment of the Coalition government’s reforms of higher education funding, and their representation in the public sphere, was unclear and the participants (nine included in this section) could only make speculative predictions concerning the implications for media studies and, in the case of higher education staff participants, their own professional practice. By the end of the interviewing period in November 2013, the first intake of students under the new arrangements had completed their first year and the second cohort had been recruited. These differing circumstances need to be considered when analysing the responses of the participants. The timing of participant interviews was driven by the research questions and constrained by participant availability and so the interviews were not uniformly distributed across the sample period. This means the responses cannot be considered as a rigorous longitudinal record of evolving participant perceptions but it does mean that the responses have to

be considered in the light of the corresponding interview date as the situation was evolving quite rapidly as the study progressed.

Public Sphere Discourse: The Coalition Higher Education Reforms

This two-year interviewing period followed significant changes to the funding mechanism for Home/EU students in English higher education initiated by the Coalition government's Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) of October 2010 (HM Treasury, 2010). Through the CSR, the government announced a reduction in the HE block grant from £5 billion to £2 billion by 2014-15 with a House of Commons vote in December 2010 to permit a rise in the maximum annual fee for full-time Home/EU undergraduate students from £3,375 to £9,000 from 2012-13. Higher education institutions were permitted to set their own fee level on a course-by-course basis, up to the maximum set by parliament, subject to the conditions of their Access Agreement with the *Office for Fair Access* (OFFA). The rise was not applied retrospectively so students starting their course in 2011-12 would continue at the lower fee level for the duration of their course. This resulted in a significant headline step-change in tuition fees for entry in 2012-13 if higher education institutions chose to raise fees to the maximum permitted, which a significant majority did. Quoting figures released by the OFFA, *The Guardian* reported in July 2012 that the average Home/EU fee for a full-time degree at English institutions would be £8,500 per year with seventy-seven per cent of institutions charging £9,000 for at least one course (*The Guardian*, 26 July 2012).

Whilst these changes to the tuition fees dominated newspaper headlines, other changes to student financing arrangements resulted in multifaceted consequences for public finances, students and HE institutions. The rise in tuition fees was accompanied by changes to the student loan system with the earnings threshold rising from £15,000 in 2011-12 to £21,000 in 2016. Once their salary rises above this amount they will repay their student loan at nine per cent of their salary above this threshold. (Student Loans Company, 2014) These changes to the repayment terms and the absence of any requirement to pay any tuition fees ‘up-front’, whilst not as heavily featured in the media headlines of the time, do mitigate the short-term impact of the rising fees on prospective students as they apply and when they graduate. However, the public sphere discourse at the time was dominated by the portrayal of the changes as a sudden and substantial rise in tuition fees with an immediate impact. In the year following the 2010 election this discourse of ‘*fees hike*’ masked a more fundamental shift in the principles of higher education funding which have been characterised by opponents as ‘*ideologically-driven changes*’. The reforms shifted English higher education funding away from a shared responsibility of the state, through general taxation, and the student, through tuition fees that were significantly lower than the cost of providing the student place. This was presented within the public sphere as part of a much larger ‘*deficit reduction*’ discourse that dominated the early years of the coalition government following the 2008 crisis in the financial industries and the consequent impact on the public finances¹. This allowed the presentation of the

¹ Precipitated by a world-wide economic downturn, the 2008 UK financial crisis resulted in a significant rise in UK government debt to 70% of GDP and a drop in confidence in UK financial markets. With the UK entering a period of recession in Q2-2008, the government took steps to

rise in tuition fees to be superficially presented as contributing to the overarching aim of reducing public spending as a means of re-balancing the public finances through deficit reduction and a consequent reduction in public borrowing. For example, a 2013 *New Statesman* article reviewing the impact of the changes to student finance equates the fee increase with deficit reduction:

“In the last Spending Review, universities were spared significant reductions because their burden of deficit reduction was met by much higher tuition fees for future graduates.” (Muir, 2013)

and David Willets, MP, Minister for Universities and Science speaking about the student loan system in the House of Commons in November 2012 said:

“The new system helps reduce the deficit and is affordable and sustainable for the Government... ..Let us be absolutely clear about what our reforms will do. They will save money for the Exchequer, but at the same time they will ensure that universities have, if anything, an increase in the cash they receive for teaching, and graduates will repay only when they are earning more than £21,000 a year. That is a fair deal for all the partners in the higher education system.” (Hansard, 8 November 2012, Column 989)

Collini sees representations of this type as disingenuous:

“The coalition is at the moment using the whipped-up frenzy about the deficit in the public finances as a cover for a recognizably ideological assault on all forms of public provision.” (Collini, 2012, p.188)

Evidence for this is suggested by McGettigan (2013) from his analysis of the macroeconomics of the ‘income-dependent repayment’ (IDR) loans that form the basis of the student finance system. The public discourse is characterised by the conventional terms of personal finance such as ‘*borrowing*’, ‘*loan*’, ‘*debt*’, ‘*repayments*’, ‘*paying back what you owe*’. This is at odds with the operation of IDR loans that have a number of features that are fundamentally different to

rebalance the public finances through both increased taxation and reduced public-spending (BBC News, 2014).

conventional personal loans; the repayment of IDR loans is contingent on graduates' income, not the amount borrowed and the lifetime of the loan is limited to thirty years with any outstanding amount written-off after that. McGettigan argues (ibid.) that this results in a system that is closer to a graduate tax than a student loan system.

Analysis

It is against this background that the participants in this study contributed their thoughts on the changes to student finance and their predictions for their impact on media studies. In this analysis, the responses are presented in chronological order with the interview date.

I know for instance, my niece has decided because of the costs that she won't, she won't be going to university so yes, I think in general as a whole, [...] it will affect the whole university [...] world.
(Participant 03, 15 November 2011)

Participant 03, a media studies graduate, immediately draws on personal experience to illustrate his perception that the changes to fees will lead to a significant reduction in the number of students applying for entry. Speaking early in the interviewing period this view reflects the initial concerns that prospective students would consider the headline tuition fees without looking at the overall funding package that does not require any 'up-front' payment. The perceptions at this point were that student numbers might decline significantly. This prediction was given added credibility by an increase in application numbers in 2011-12 as students rushed to enter university in the last year of the previous fee arrangements, for example, by entering higher education directly after school or college rather than taking a 'gap year'.

I think one of the problems with the funding is that parents are going to take a bigger role than they have so whereas parents have said, “Oh, so and so has gone off to university and they’ve gone, you know, now parents are going to be following student’s progress far more closely, [...] or grandparents, or whoever it is who is assisting. Because I think the students are going to need, will be looking for assistance on the fees. (Participant 02, 21 November 2011)

Similarly, Participant 02 predicts an increasing and on-going role for students’ family in monitoring their progress but the rationale he gives is based on the assumption that family members will be making a financial contribution towards the tuition fees. Although it is not explicit in the participant response, this implies a view that the payment of tuition fees is a significant ‘up-front’ cost, it does not really suggest a view that family members are anticipating making a contribution to the student’s IDR loan repayments once they are triggered by the income threshold, reflecting the concerns of the time.

It logically will make people scan courses and ask themselves this question, ‘Am I going to get a job?’ (...) And what, my line when I talk to applicants or to parents about this is that the media is a very fast changing world and by and large, it’s a growing world and more and more aspects of social life require some degree of media skills and as I said before, there is no evidence at all that process is going to slow down or change. (Participant 04, 8 December 2011)

Participant 04, also speaking during the recruitment of the first post-fee increase cohort, relates the changes directly to media studies with a prediction that both prospective students and their families will pay more attention to the likely employment outcomes following graduation from particular courses when considering an application. On the basis of his perception of global trends, he is confident that employment in the media will continue strongly and so he does not see a differential negative impact on media studies over other subjects, in contrast to some of the concerns regarding humanities-based subjects that were

expressed at the time (see Chapter Five, Section 5-6). However, this view still seems to be based around an acceptance of the idea of tuition fees as personal debt that must be repaid and therefore secure and well-paid employment is a requirement on graduation. It does not recognise the 'fail-safe' aspects of IDR loans.

Participants 02 and 04 are higher education professionals with, as a result of their age when studying, no direct personal experience of tuition fees and student loans although they may have experience of previous fee/loan structures as parents or other family/personal connections. In contrast, Participant 05 studied and graduated under the first 'top-up' fees regime, introduced by New Labour government 2004 and so has personal experience of tuition fees and student loans, albeit at a significantly lower level than the current regime. His approach to student debt is more relaxed:

Obviously it's not nice being in that much debt, but I do think that, I still do think student debt is the easiest debt you'll ever have, because you don't have to pay it back until you're earning a certain amount, even then when you're earning a certain amount, it's such a minimal thing, and it's a miss-able amount, essentially. (Participant 05, 16 May 2012)

Working relatively securely in the television industry as a researcher, this participant sees the repayment threshold and the deduction at source as significantly mitigating the impact of tuition fees. The 2012 changes appear to be less significant to this graduate from the 'top-up' scheme than they do to older graduates with a perception of a '*golden age*' of free tuition that they may recall with some guilt.

The impact of the fees, I think is that there is a reactivity within the admissions process in terms of widening out the brief of applicants. So I think it has, has a, might have an impact on the selection process. This year I think everyone is quite (...) nervous. Err, whether the figures will convert. (Participant 06, 25 May 2012)

The response from Participant 06 shows the concern about recruitment of the 2012-13 cohort. Speaking in May 2012, this participant would have been aware of the number of applications received for her course, the recruitment target (which will have informed budget setting), the number of conditional and unconditional offers made together with the number of acceptances by students.

The achievement of recruitment targets is a significant performance metric at all levels within an institution (*Supporting Professionalism in Admissions*, 2012) and particularly so over the fieldwork period as institutions were subject to Student Number Controls (SNC) that penalised institutions that significantly over or under recruited numbers of students. This was further complicated for 2012-13 recruitment by the removal of SNC measures for students achieving the equivalent of AAB or better at A2-Level. This cap applied only at the institutional level but most managed this process by setting targets at the various organisational levels within the institution; faculty, department, course etc. that, when aggregated, delivered the required institutional outcome (*Supporting Professionalism in Admissions*, 2013). This allowed institutions to manage under and over recruitment in particular areas by moving SNC allocations from course to course. This mechanism allowed overall management of recruitment but could lead to the anxiety shown by Participant 06 as both people and physical resources are much more difficult to redeploy.

Admissions departments use historical trends as a guide to the number of offers they need to make to produce the required number of new students, recognising that students can apply to up to five different institutions/courses before then narrowing that to a first and second choice. The model will also account for the number of students with conditional offers who fail to meet the conditions and the number of second choice offer students that meet the conditions of their first choice. If this model predicts a short-fall in student numbers then the institution will probably plan to bridge this gap through recruitment during the Clearing period in August. With these factors in mind, Participant 06 indicates the level of concern with the institution in May 2012 when the applications have been received and offers have been made but results are awaited. The first part of the participant's response indicates that, for this course, the university has received fewer applicants than it expected and so has made offers to a greater proportion of applicants than would have been the case in previous years. However, broadening the profile of students to which offers are made means the predictions made on the basis of historical data may no longer be valid. This is the concern raised by the participant (*"This year I think everyone is, is quite [...] nervous. Err, whether the figures will convert."*). The predicted rate of conversion from offers to registered students may not be accurate as a result of changing student behaviour caused by the changes in fees and reflects the uncertainty of the times.

Participant 07 is a colleague of Participant 06 and is part of the same course team but does not have any course leadership responsibilities. His response, speaking

on the same day, was noticeably less detailed when asked what he thought about the changes in tuition fees:

No, don't know. Don't know, who knows?... ..Well no, yeah so I think that will become apparent in two or three years time.
(Participant 07, 25 May 2012)

This response highlights the pressures on his colleague, the course leader, who is much more concerned about the short-term effect of the fee changes.

Participant 07 recognised the uncertainties of the position at that time and acknowledged that clarity will only emerge once the evidence from a number of recruitment cycles is available.

Also recorded during May 2012, the response from Participant 08 is significant as it appears to be based on an assumption that once students are paying higher tuition fees they will expect a higher level of 'service', an approach that is consistent with a '*student as customer*' discourse.

We've got quite an active Head of Student Services and she's talked to everybody about student complaints because her perception, based on some evidence, early evidence, is that student complaints are going to rise significantly. (Participant 08, 30 May 2012)

Within this discourse, a transfer, at least in headline terms, of the burden of funding from the state to the individual leads to the student perceiving themselves as the consumer of a specific service at a particular price rather than as a member of a learning community with reciprocal rights and responsibilities. If students are perceived as consuming a service then if that service falls below the contracted level then, within this model, that should be resolved through a complaints process.

Whilst this is a second-hand account of the views of a Head of Student Services, it does provide some insight into the ways external change can sometimes be used to facilitate internal change, particularly if the institutional power is perceived as exercised through the discourse of '*new managerialism*' (see Chapter Six, Section 6-3). The initial clue in this is in the description of the Head of Student Services as "*quite an active...*". In this context this can be read as probably an under-statement and so mentioning it at all suggests that the participant sees this person as very active. This is reinforced by the comment that "*she's talked to everybody*". Whilst probably not literally true, it does convey the image of a person who is dynamically and enthusiastically approaching the role. The participant then goes on to report that the Head of Student Services has formed the view that "*student complaints are going to rise significantly*" but with the caveat that this is somewhat speculative as it is "*based on some evidence, early evidence*" which indicates that the participant does not regard the assertion that numbers of complaints will rise as strongly evidenced.

Within the context of this response it is reasonable to assume that the Head of Student Services is responsible for the management of student complaints and therefore has a rationale for her post within the organisation and the allocation of associated resources that is partially based on the existence and handling of any complaints. If there were never any student complaints then fewer resources would be required and the need to manage the process would be removed. So there is little incentive for a Head of Student Services with a responsibility for student complaints to minimise the impact of increased fees on student complaints and it may be the case that this person is using the public discourse of

'fee hike' and 'students as customers' (Bates and Kaye, 2014) as a vehicle for promoting and enhancing the service that her team offer the institution. This exemplifies the complex nature of interactions between public discourse and professional practice within this context; an institution may be publically countering the discourse of 'fee hike' by promoting 'no up-front fees' and 'income-dependent safety-net' to prospective students to aid recruitment but is simultaneously appropriating the 'fee hike' discourse to facilitate change internally.

Participant 09 is the course leader for a foundation degree in media within an FE/HE college. His perspective on the impact of the fee changes is distinctive as he has experience of leading and managing a higher education course and also working on BTEC National Diplomas that students use as entry qualifications for degree-level courses at either the same institution or elsewhere. Speaking in June 2012, he had supported FHEQ Level Three students as they applied for higher education courses as the first cohort under the new regime and he also anticipated the completion of the recruitment cycle for the foundation degree course that he led. This dual-role provided useful insights into the perceptions of fees at that time:

The one thing we've noticed, biggest impact this year, was the number of students who are looking at apprenticeships rather than university. The number of students going to university has definitely dropped. (Participant 09, 1 June 2012)

This initial response identifies a trend, at least within his Level Three towards students applying for apprenticeships following the completion of Level Three studies rather than applying for a degree course. The resurgence of

apprenticeships can be considered in the light of a public discourse that laments, particularly in the aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, the passing of skilled craftsmanship and substantive manufacturing industries from the UK economy over the latter half of the twentieth century (see for example, Newton, 2009; Basketter, 2009) and interlocks with the ‘*real world*’ discourse discussed in Chapter 6, Section 6-6. The *Skills Funding Agency* description of apprenticeships begins with:

“Apprenticeships give you the opportunity to work for a **real** employer, earn a **real** salary and gain a **real** qualification whilst gaining valuable workplace skills and experience.” (Skills Funding Agency, 2014 (researcher’s emphasis))

The Telegraph newspaper summarises the case for apprenticeships as an alternative to a university course as a direct route to employment that also avoids student debt:

“Too often thought of as a poor alternative to university, apprenticeships are becoming the route of choice for many young people who don’t wish to accumulate thousands of pounds worth of debt and who wish to get straight into a working environment.” (Gurney-Read, 28 January 2014)

The article promotes apprenticeships on the basis of a comparison between the salaries paid to apprentices and graduate salaries. Whilst acknowledging that “*average pay for graduates was actually higher than those in apprenticeships*” the case is made by referring to data that show that more than twenty-five per cent of graduates earn less than the average apprenticeship salary whilst still incurring student loan debt. However, the quoted average salary for apprentices is £11.10 per hour which is equivalent to an annual salary of £20,200. This is below the £21,000 threshold that triggers the repayment of students’ loans and will not be a significant factor for those lower paid graduates. *The Telegraph’s* analysis makes

no reference to the longer-term salary prospects of apprentices and graduates but focuses on short-term outcomes. It may be that significant earnings differences emerge over time. The article contains a number of case studies telling the stories of a number of successful apprentices, one of which notes that:

“These schemes also supply the economy with skilled workers which is what we need for our economy to keep growing.” (ibid.)

This ties the rationale for apprenticeships to the discourse of economic growth and skilled workers in an instrumental way that is distinctive from the discourse of media studies graduates as active within the creative industries as an aspect of ‘critical citizenship’ (Johnson and Morris, 2010).

Participant 09 goes on to reflect on the attitudes of prospective students towards large sums of money and refers to the measures that institutions take to explain the operation of student finance and the arrangements for paying back loans:

You know debt is one of the things, I mean the college has sort of said to them about how much you’ll be paying back, they’ve had all the talks from student finance and everything (...) but I think – this is just my opinion – I think if you say to an eighteen year old that you’re paying £9,000 a year plus you’ve got your living costs and everything on top but it doesn’t matter ‘cause when you, you leave you’ll only be paying about twenty quid a month or whatever, they see that kind of £27,000 tuition fees plus maybe another £20,000 or whatever; they’re looking about £50,000. You know, kind of bank loans and student fees and all sorts of different ... and they just, they just can’t calculate. They don’t deal with that kind of money. (Participant 09, 1 June 2012)

Speaking at a similar point in the recruitment cycle, the response of Participant 10 contrasts with the view of Participant 09. She does predict a very direct impact on media studies courses with a response that is consistent with a ‘value

for money' discourse ("vocational", "employer-based skills", "not be able to be as critically thinking", "a good job at the end of it"):

Yeah. Clearly it's going to have a massive impact and yes there will be a massive drive to much more courses that are much more vocational and have much more employer based skills, and I think, you know, media courses will, will not be able to be as critically thinking as perhaps they used to be, because there will be an absolute drive to -, well it's not just media degrees is it? For, for many, many of the degrees that people will go to, they want an outcome and the outcome if they've put, you know, £9,000 a year is, is a good job at the end of it. (Participant 10, 27 June 2012)

Summary and Conclusions

The rise in undergraduate tuition fees for students starting media studies courses in 2012-13 understandably dominated the public discourses around higher education over the time period covered by the participant interviews and that is reflected in the responses here. Most of the higher education professionals interviewed are focussed on the issue and can only see it negatively. The media graduate participant was rather more sanguine but can perhaps afford to take this position as he is now removed from the consequences and regards his £3000 fees as quite reasonable.

It is still too early to assess the full impact that the changes will have on either the statistics of higher education participation or the nature of media studies higher education. Early indications are, following an increase in recruitment in 2011-12 attributed to a desire to enter higher education before the fee increase and a dip in recruitment in the first year of the new regime (2012-13), that recruitment is starting to recover to 2010-11 levels (White, 2012). Definitive data from the Higher Education Statistics Agency has not yet been published for

the 2013-14 academic year but UCAS have published their data for the acceptance of places (which is not same as the active registrations measured by HESA but is clearly related). This shows that there were 445,820 UK/EU domiciled acceptances four weeks after the A2-level results publication for entry in 2013-14. This figure is nine per cent higher than 2012-13 (the first year of the current fee/loan arrangements), four per cent lower than the peak, pre-fee increase year of 2011-12 and one per cent higher than 2010-11 (UCAS, 2014). However these overall figures mask shifts within the sector as, for example, student numbers increased at some Russell Group universities and decreased at some Post-92 institutions as a result of the relaxation of the SNC for students with AAB and ABB grades (or equivalent) (White, 2012). At the time of writing, a subject breakdown of the data is not yet available for 2013-14 but the HESA data for 2011-12 and 2012-13 shows a drop in fulltime first year undergraduate students studying Mass Communications and Documentation fell from 15,145 (2011-12) to 12,635 (2012-13), a drop of 16.6 per cent. This is significantly greater than the 8.6 per cent drop experienced by the sector as a whole over the same period and so does suggest that the initial impact of the fee changes has had more impact on media studies than on other subject areas.

The apocalyptic visions of some commentators (Whelan *et al.*, 2013; Collini, 2012) have not yet been fully realised although the strengthening of the link between individual financial contributions and individual institutions has promoted the discourse of '*student as customer*' amongst the participants.

The most recent media coverage of the issue appears to be trailing further reforms to the tuition fee system as McGettigan's (2013) financial analysis of the

loan book is confirmed and so proposals to change the loan repayment terms are being floated for implementation after the 2015 General Election (Gurney-Read, July 2014).

7-5 Student Experience and Engagement: “At the sharp end”

Introduction

“Our university sector has a proud history and a world-class reputation, attracting students from across the world... ..This White Paper builds on that record, while doing more than ever to put students in the driving seat. We want to see more investment, greater diversity and less centralised control. But, in return, we want the sector to become more accountable to students, as well as to the taxpayer.” (BIS, 2011, p.2)

Change will be brought about [sigh] to some extent by the students. (Participant 01)

This section analyses the ways participants (three represented in this section) portray the relationships between academic staff and students within media studies, particularly in the light of the higher education reforms introduced by the Coalition government and heralded by the *Students at the Heart of the System* white paper published by the *Department for Business, Innovation and Skills* (BIS) in June 2011. The participant responses to the changes in tuition fees that resulted from these reforms are addressed in Chapter Seven, Section 7-4. This analysis focuses on the related changes that put an emphasis on empowering the student as an agent of change through a discourse of ‘*student experience*’, ‘*partnership*’ and ‘*engagement*’ (Kay et al., 2010).

Analysis

The response of Participant 01 (above) recognises the role of students in bringing about change but she sees this as limited (“to some extent”) and it is delivered with a sense of weariness. However, consideration of her elaboration of this remark shows a more positive approach to working in partnership with students:

I wish I had spoken more to current students. I think that they would have had, when I was doing development work, I think they would have been... To me, the team, I understood was academics and it should have been. To me, that's, and now looking at it with hindsight and recognising how these things should work, I think it should be students, alumni, employers and all sorts. (Participant 01)

The regret is associated with hindsight following the development of a new journalism course shortly after appointment as a new member of academic staff following a career as a journalist and experiencing less support from other academic staff than she expected:

The academics were the ones who said, "I'm sorry. I'm far too busy. You'll have to do it by yourself". (Participant 01)

The participant then provides a rationale for the engagement of students in the course development process that echoes some of the public discourse (researcher's emphasis):

The students are at the sharp end of this delivery and they can see very often, where there are gaps. And we forget that **students are actually really well placed** because very often, they have a huge network of other students in other institutions and they all talk, however, whether it's via social media or whatever. And so they actually are influenced. They can bring lots of thoughts into play and if we're actually not open to that, or not even listening to those then we miss out on that and I think that's absolutely crucial. (Participant 01)

This response sees students as "*well placed*", a phrasing similar to that found in the *Browne Report* that preceded the *Students at the Heart of the System* BIS White Paper:

"We want to put students at the heart of the system. **Students are best placed to** make the judgement about what they want to get from participating in higher education." (Browne, 2010, p. 25, researcher's emphasis)

Sabri considers this phrasing as implying a diminishment of the role of academics:

“Students’ agency too is simple: all students are ‘best placed’. ‘Best’ implies that there are other invisible actors who are not so well placed to make such judgments. We can assume that these actors are academics and others in higher education whose judgments are now implicitly construed as having less value than those of students.” (Sabri, 2011, p660)

Although Participant 01 appears to engage with the public discourse as her response deploys similarly wording to Sabri’s, there is a significant difference.

Whereas the Browne Report refers to students as ‘best’ placed to make judgments about their higher education, the participant sees them as ‘*really well*’ placed. This implies a view that student involvement in change is important and valued but not dominant and less of a threat to academics than that perceived by Sabri. The discourse that emerges from the participant’s response is better characterised as ‘*partnership*’ with this approach extended to “*students, alumni, employers and all sorts*”.

Speaking of the tendency to equate practical production work with the vocational, Participant 04 takes a more paternalistic view of what students should be thinking:

It’s very bad if it becomes too strong in the students’ mind because they start seeing anything that’s theoretical, critical or not based around using equipment as actually a waste of their time, potentially and you don’t want that. (Participant 04)

This response clearly privileges the academic view of the issue and, whilst considering what is perceived to be in the best interests of the students, does not engage with the discourse of ‘*student as partner*’ but is framed as (“*too strong in the students’ mind*”, “*you don’t want that*”). Whilst there is copious literature that identifies the benefits of working in partnership with students, much of it is

uncritical and fails to tackle the depth of partnership working beyond the discourse of '*student voice*' and '*student representation*' that might help the contextualisation of this participant response. Seale *et al.* (2014) do provide a critical commentary of the area that can be usefully applied here. They argue that specific issues need consideration; tutors making selective use of student representations to support their pre-conceptions, student expectations of the role of the lecturer (a discourse of '*I pay my fees, now you expect me to set the assignment and mark it?*'), an uncritical acceptance of student views because of their source together with an undervaluing of lecturer expertise, again because of its source.

This analysis can be used to contextualise the response of Participant 04.

Students have a right and an obligation to voice their perceptions of what they require from a course (for example, in this case, '*we want to learn how to use a camera so that we can get a job when we leave*') and the lecturer has a right and an obligation to point out the limitations of this approach and both students and lecturer need to engage in a meaningful dialogue to resolve the issue.

Participant 18 makes this clear in his response that distinguishes '*partners*' from '*customers*' ("*students are not always right*") and identifies the need for the distinct roles of students, academic and administrative staff to be clear and explicit:

Students should be in an academic partnership, and that partnership means that, unlike customers, students are not always right. Students have responsibilities, students have roles just as academic staff and administrative staff have responsibilities and roles within a university. (Participant 18)

Summary and Conclusions

The discourses of student participation and engagement are inextricably linked to the discourses of fees and an instrumental view of higher education. The participants here show a positive engagement with the discourse of '*students as partners*'. This is consistent with the findings of Little *et al.* (2009) that identified staff and students from creative arts subjects as more likely to engage with the ideas of '*partnership*' and '*co-creation*' than other subject areas and so this analysis may not be extendable to other subjects.

Whilst recognising the benefits and legitimacy of this approach the participants have also fore-grounded the issues that arise from the power relations in partnership working that can be overlooked but that must be addressed. The student can '*get things done*' because they now have a voice but tutors have an authority derived from their position and experience that can provide a broader, more considered view. A balance between the two is likely to yield the best results.

This final section concludes the analysis of discourses of public policy. This chapter has illustrated the ways an individual and, in numerical terms (see Chapter One), small area of English higher education has responded and is responding to national scale policy changes. The discourses of academic practice identified in Chapter Six are seen here operating in relation to specific national initiatives. For example, this section shows the longstanding discourse of '*collegiality*' is migrated to the discourse of '*students as partners*'.

Chapter Eight

Discussion of the Findings and Conclusions

8-1 Introduction

“When the ratio of inner beliefs to public presentation changes dramatically, this can produce feelings of being duplicitous and inauthentic.” (Morley, 2003, p.73)

Morley is speaking here of the impact of ‘*new managerialism*’ on “*counter-hegemonic intellectuals*”, a term derived from Dominelli and Hoogvelt (1996).

They argue, from a starting point of Gramsci’s (1971) concept of ‘*organic intellectuals*’, that the growth in numbers of both students and academic staff in higher education following the publication and government acceptance of the Robbins Report (1963) provided:

“a home for intellectuals critical of society looking for alternative visions, as well as those supportive of the status quo.” (Dominelli and Hoogvelt, 1996, p.72)

The findings of this study do provide evidence with which to unpack Morley’s contention as it relates to the specifics of contemporary media studies in English higher education. The modelling of media studies as a collection of social practices constructed and enacted through discourses can provide some insight into the validity of Morley’s statement, a decade after its publication, although

there are conceptual problems with a direct interpretation of the terms Morley uses. In this study, media studies is regarded as socially constructed and no assumption is made about the relationship, if any, between the discourses evidenced through participant responses and their “inner beliefs”. However, if the study findings are considered as evidencing a series of interacting discourses that collectively embody media studies and the professional practices associated with them then it is possible to infer relationships between these discourses that allow a more nuanced characterisation of media studies that goes beyond value-laden terms such as “*duplicitous*” and “*inauthentic*”. Characterising the participants in media studies as saying one thing (for example, “*study the media and you’ll get a great job in the creative industries*”) about the subject within a public and institutional discourse and knowingly saying something else within an academic discourse (for example, “*study the media and you’ll understand something about the world*”) is seductive but is not supported by the evidence of this study. This is a false dichotomy based on a consideration of the outcomes in relation to the research questions posed at the outset. This chapter consists of an over-arching summary of the thematic analyses and some conclusions drawn from this evidence together with a consideration of the limitations of the study and a positioning of the work in relation to the current direction of the field. The final sections consider the impact of the work on higher education professional practice and make some suggestions for future research that could further develop some of the themes emerging from this study.

8-2 Summary of Analyses

The initial analysis (Chapter Five) of the participant response data considered the discourses of identity that emerged in relation to the participants' presentation of their professional identities and the ways the participants characterised the identity of media studies as a subject.

The participants discussed their previous professional experiences and their current engagement with media studies (Chapter Five, Section 5-2). This was important as it allowed the contextualisation of their responses in subsequent analyses and confirmed the connection between these individuals and the discursive practices under investigation.

The analysis of these responses confirmed that this group was sufficiently diverse and relevant to provide a basis on which to develop a qualitative analysis, based on the characterisation of qualitative research by Wetherell *et al.* (2003). The participants were drawn from a cross-section of media studies including some participants who have been media students and some other professionals engaged in higher education practices but from outside media studies.

Participants were then asked to discuss (Chapter Five, Section 5-3) their rationale for media studies in higher education. A number of participants found this difficult to articulate and said that it is not a routine topic of conversation. The dominant theme through these responses was the oppositional discourses of media studies as training for employment in the media industries derived from public and institutional policy discourses and media studies as a multi-disciplinary academic subject that develops critical and analytical skills for long term personal

development (*'critical citizenship'* (Johnson and Morris, 2010)). The participants gave strikingly consistent accounts of the purpose of media studies and demonstrated their adeptness at managing and manipulating oppositional discourses with an approach that can be accessed via either discourse, depending on context and modality.

To further this consideration of a identity for media studies the analysis moved to the participants' perceptions of the terms *'vocational'* and *'employability'* as these appear to be significant terms in the public discourse. The responses showed that the participants see the value of the term *'vocational'* as shifted within the public discourse and that the term has become increasingly devalued. The participants were more positive about the term *'employability'* as this provided them with an opportunity to balance discursive power across the public and the academic, using the term to represent narrow *'first job'* skills for employment in a narrow range of professional roles when engaged with public discourse but using it to represent much broader academic, critical and analytical skills when engaged with academic discourse, a useful *'weasel'* word.

The analysis of explicit references to the media industries revealed the limitations of a public discourse based around the language of a traditional employer/employee relationship that does not fit contemporary employment practices in the creative industries. Academic staff spoke of collaboration with the media industries but wanted to express this in terms of *'partnership'* rather than a supplier/consumer relationship and suggested that industry could learn from the academy rather than directly dictating skills requirements.

The analysis then moved to a consideration of the discourse of '*transferable skills*'. This is a further example of a sophisticated manipulation of discourse by academic staff balancing power through the deployment of a term that sits across oppositional discourses. Within a public policy discourse it is associated with skills for immediate employment whilst within an academic discourse it is associated with broader intellectual and personal development.

Having considered the discourses of identity, Chapter Six brought together the discourses of academic practice. This began with an analysis focused on the participants' perceptions of the way media courses are designed. This revealed an area for future development as much of the current literature focuses on teaching, learning and assessment at module/unit level with little consideration of how discursive practices result in curriculum selection and course structure. The data available in this study point to an important connection between public policy discourse and course design with the process seen as a '*collegiate*' activity, constrained by '*new managerialism*' and public discourses of instrumental higher education but this requires further investigation.

One of the formal connections between public and institutional policy and course design is through quality assurance and enhancement activities informed at a national level by the Quality Code published by the Quality Assurance Agency and monitored through the process of Higher Education Review (Quality Assurance Agency, 2014). The discourse of '*quality*' that permeates national and institutional policies was countered in the responses of the participants with a discourse of '*aliens*', '*rubber-stamping*' and '*tick-box*'. However, this was balanced by a recognition that high quality teaching and learning cannot just be assumed

and that formal processes can contribute to student achievement and attainment. This illustrated the ways in which academic staff balance discursive practices to hold excessive and ‘*ethereal*’ administrative processes at arms length without overtly opposing them through confrontation.

Following up on the theme of ‘*theory*’ and/or ‘*practice*’ from a consideration of the emergence and development of media studies in Chapter Two, the discourse of ‘*theory/practice*’ was tracked through the participant responses. The analysis showed that this perennial media studies debate is discursively connected to the rationale for media studies with ‘*practice*’ being associated with the ‘*vocational*’ and ‘*theory*’ associated with the ‘*academic*’. Participants appropriated the term ‘*employability*’ to integrate these and justify a critical, analytical and theoretical approach to the subject through a desire to foster longer-term career development. ‘*Practice*’ can then be framed as a pedagogic device for enhancing students’ understanding of ‘*theory*’.

The role of theory and practice was then developed into a consideration of the discourses around assessment practices. Media graduates saw assessment primarily as an opportunity to learn through practice and were uncritical of the summative aspects, lecturers were much more concerned about the authenticity of assessment practices and their relationship to the discourses of ‘*skills*’ and ‘*employability*’.

The essence of Foucauldian (2002) power is the ability to ‘*get things done*’. Within an academic environment this is framed in terms of discourses of ‘*new managerialism*’ and ‘*collegiality*’. Analysing participant responses for the ways in

which they work with each other and in relation to their institutional environment showed that power is not simply associated with institutional hierarchies as lecturers find ways of informally working together more or less successfully whilst conforming to managerially imposed collegiate working through, sometimes rather ephemeral, '*course teams*'. The managers in the participant group did not deploy discursive practices that would indicate that they perceive themselves as '*powerful*' although interviews with senior managers at vice-chancellor level may have yielded different perspectives.

This relationship between industry, wider society and the academy is very clearly denoted by a discourse of '*out there in the real world*'. Widely used both inside and outside the academy as evidenced by the participant responses, this denotes a clear hierarchy with education portrayed as artificial, a simulation and subservient. A discursive practice is created that mitigates against collaboration. The widespread use of this phrasing amongst media lecturers is significant as it is one area of the analysis which suggests that academic staff are not balancing an oppositional discourse but are comfortable using language that keeps education '*in its place*'.

Having arranged for a group of participants that reasonably reflect the diversity of media studies provision across English HE, it is informative to consider the variation in responses across these different settings. Participants demonstrated an awareness of differences in settings and some, because of the experience of different institutions, were able to articulate these differences from their perspective. However, more significantly, the language deployed when invited to talk about a rationale for media studies and their interactions with the public

discourse of *'vocationalism'* and *'employability'* was notably similar, giving a sector-wide coherence to the value of media studies and its role in higher education.

Chapter Seven, the final data analysis chapter, considers the participant responses in relation to specific discourses of public higher education policy. The initial theme is a consideration of the *'market'* aspects of higher education looked at through a discussion of recruitment and admissions practices. The analysis considers fragments of public discourse taken from universities' promotional materials to illustrate the different ways universities choose to present their media courses to prospective students. Varying institutional missions matched varying marketing propositions. The participant responses confirmed this analysis, demonstrating how academic staff can pragmatically engage with institutional recruitment practices with a discourse of *'employability'* that *'sells'* courses on the basis of initial employment prospects whilst maintaining a distinctive oppositional position within an academic discourse of *'employability.'*

The analysis then considered the process of students joining media courses from the opposite direction with a focus on an interview with a secondary school headteacher with experience of advising university applicants. This demonstrated the extent to which advisors are engaged with the public discourses of *'employability'* and *'value for money'* and the amplification of this through the changes to student finance. The analysis revealed that, for this sample, the Russell Group is the only mission group with any significant visibility within the discourse and that league tables are a more significant element for highly selective universities than they are for others. In considering the recruitment and

admissions process from a student perspective, the analysis also illustrated the significant impact of these social practices on individuals.

The most significant change to national higher education policy over the course of the study was the raising of the cap on undergraduate tuition fees to £9000p.a. alongside a reduction of government grant funding. The fieldwork for the study bridged the first two years of the new arrangements and so captures the perceptions of the participants across the transition. The conflation of a shift in the funding burden from state to student with a discourse of '*deficit reduction*' resulted in some participants expressing serious concerns that again demonstrate the ways in which they balance oppositional discourses. There was concern that the changes would make it harder to deliver critical and analytical media studies for personal development in a climate of '*student as £9000 customer*' but a recognition that student recruitment is a necessary part of the academic role. The predictions of an apocalyptic end to higher education 'as we know it' dissipated once the message of favourable repayment terms gained traction and overall student recruitment showed early signs of some recovery, although early indication suggest a differential negative impact on media studies recruitment.

The final analytical theme considered the discourses of '*student experience*', '*students as partners*'. A common feature of contemporary public policy discourse through the *Students at the Heart of the System* (Department for Business, Innovation and Skills, 2011) white paper and a preoccupation with the National Student Survey, this set of participant responses showed an engagement with this language but revealed some of the tensions in a student/academic staff '*partnership*' discourse that reveal something of the underlying power relations.

Collectively, the analyses reveal a complex set of discursive practices that generally demonstrate a sophisticated use of language by the participants that maintains media studies in a social structure and equilibrium through adopting, appropriating and manipulating the language of public policy discourse and recasting it in ways that are consistent with a historical and contemporary rationale for the subject within the academy.

8-3 Limitations of the Study

This section is a critical evaluation of the methodological approach and the implications of this on the limits to the applicability of the findings. This study is an investigation of undergraduate media studies that is notably self-referential. It is a consideration of the discourses around media studies as evidenced through publicly available examples and in-depth interviews between the author, a media studies academic, and other media studies academics together with media studies graduates and other education professionals. This immediately raises questions of partiality. As noted by Hyatt:

“This raises the need for the analyst to locate their work within an understanding of notions of reflectivity and reflexivity, whereby the author does not only subject their understandings to (self) critical scrutiny but is also aware that their previous experiences will affect the way they interpret the present. Indeed CDA advocates are not embarrassed by charges of partiality – they revel in it!” (Hyatt, 2014)

The methodological processes associated with the interviewing process offer multiple opportunities for the selection and rejection of data that ultimately result in an over-arching narrative that is presented as rationally derived from the data. The justification for this is considered here.

Although generating a significant amount of raw data, this study is based on the selection of a relatively small number of participants. The participants were selected to be reasonably indicative of the media studies community, appropriate to a small-scale qualitative study but selecting different participants would have resulted in different responses (Cohen *et al.*, 2001). Regarding this particular set of responses as appropriate is reasonable as they show a broad internal consistency with few radical outliers; collectively they portray a coherent picture of media studies as defined within the project. The responses are also comparable with the existing research literature with the themes, practices and discourses emerging from the interviews comparable with those identified in the literature. This increases confidence in the data.

Building on the discussion in Chapter Four of the role of the researcher, having selected the participants, the interview process can never be neutral. The conduct of the interview must inevitably lead the participants to be more likely to give some responses than others (Fairclough, 2003; Wetherell, 2003). In this study, care was taken to limit the input of the interviewer to the minimum necessary to stimulate responses, provide broad comparability between interviews and to constrain them to the time agreed with the participant. Care has been taken throughout the study to refer to the interviewees as '*participants*', recognising that the data is co-created by the researcher and participant, and to refer to '*prompts*' rather than '*questions*', to emphasise that all responses make a contribution and that there are no '*answers*'.

Following the interview, the audio recordings were independently and professionally transcribed and then checked and refined where there were issues

of technical content. This should be a broadly neutral process but the change in modes needs to be recognised. Fundamentally, the interviews are a sequence of speech acts, not the written textual representations. The transcription process retains the intonation, some non-lexical vocables and pauses to present the data as speech rather than written text but reading the transcript can never be the same as listening to the interview.

Of greater significance, is the selection from the full transcripts of the response fragments to be included in the formal analysis presented here. This editorial process has to be the exercise of subjective judgment and inevitably lays a narrative over the data. There is also a danger of selecting a small fragment of response and taking it out of the context of the longer conversation, potentially misrepresenting the participant. The selection principles applied here have been to follow the narrative of the existing literature, in so far as there is a consistent picture, and to focus on elements of the participant responses that are consistent with or contradict the relevant elements of public and institutional discourse, as evidenced through publically available materials. A sample complete transcript of the interview with Participant 15 is included as Appendix 6 to give an indication of the nature of the full interviews.

Recognising that the interview selection, conduct and analytical processes are necessarily partial, there also needs to be an acknowledgement that the conceptual framework cannot be neutral and adopting a specific epistemological stance will influence the outcomes and the relationship of this work to the wider body of research literature.

The adoption of a framework that regards media studies as a series of socially constructed practices enacted through discourses that evidence Foucauldian power relationships is a common approach to the sociology of higher education. This does enable this work to dovetail with the current literature but it is not without its limitations.

Willig (2014) notes the limitations of discourse analysis in its potential disregard for cognitive agency; 'the person', 'the self', and so the process of identifying and analysing discourses contributes nothing to an understanding of participant motivation, although she recognises that Foucault's approach that regards individuals as "*constructed through and positioned within discourse*" (ibid., p.345) partially addresses this. What is motivating a participant when they access particular discourses? Willig goes on to suggest that this can lead to ethical issues in research interviewing as there is a danger that the participant will assume that it is their views and experiences that the interviewer is seeking rather than examples of discursive practices. This concern was explicitly addressed in this study through the Project information Sheet (Appendix 2) provided to all participants.

Reed (2000) has undertaken a philosophical critique of Foucauldian discourse analysis that revisits its epistemological and ontological underpinnings, identifies weaknesses and proposes an alternative approach to discourse that is underpinned by critical realism. Similarly to Willig's concern that discourse is divorced from the individual, Reed questions the arbitrariness of constructivism where "*reality is literally 'talked and texted' into existence*" (ibid. p.525) and, as expressed by Gergen (1994, p.72), "*whatever is, simply is*".

Reed also has concerns regarding agency and determinism and questions the non-deterministic existence of discourse outside the agency of individuals. Of particular relevance to this study, Reed raises the possibility of individuals actively knowing, identifying, crossing and playing with discourses rather than just passively accessing the 'sayable'. With a sample of education professionals and media graduates, this is certainly possible, even likely, in this study. This may be an explanation for one of the observations arising from the analysis; that academic staff practice at the intersections of oppositional discourses and move between them, maintaining a balance of power. However, this can still be thought of as 'meta-discourse' (Kopple, 1985), the discursive practice of switching, manipulating and subverting discourses.

Alvesson and Kärreman (2011) take a broadly positive view of a '*talk and text*' approach to the analysis of organisations but lament the disparate nature of the field; "*the only thing that unites much discourse work is the use of the term discourse.*" (ibid. p.1142). Their survey of the field identifies such variation in both the theory and methodology of discourse analysis that there is little in common beyond "discourse constitutes":

"...the magic of the expression 'discourse constitutes' probably needs to be backed up with a bit more precision and openness for empirical inquiry and/or balanced with other ideas and concepts indicating other aspects (thinking, materiality, cultural taken for granted assumptions, meaning patterns . . .) also having a say in what is constituting something." (ibid. p.1141)

These are pertinent criticisms of discourse analysis and it is important to be continually aware of the assumptions and limitations that constrain discourse analysis. This needs to be balanced against the power of discourse analysis to

tightly integrate the theoretical and the methodological, allowing a sophisticated model of higher education that acknowledges the difficulty in identifying ‘*truth*’ and ‘*reality*’ and foregrounds the role of the researcher in the production of the research data.

8-4 Conclusions

This section revisits the research questions posed at the outset of the study and considers the contribution the study has made to addressing them.

- I. How are media studies courses conceived in terms of public and academic discourses? What does this indicate about the purpose and value of media studies and how does this relate to the associated professional practices?

The comparisons of public and academic discourses, evidenced through available materials and participant responses, demonstrate how media studies is enacted as a series of social practices (recruitment, admissions, curriculum design, teaching, learning and assessment) that are shaped and influenced but not dominated by public, industry and institutional structures. The purpose and value of media studies, as articulated by the participants, is expressed within a discourse that is consistent with the historical development of the subject. This does not mean that there is a rationale for media studies that is coherent and universally accepted. The nature and purpose of the subject is still contested and evolving but the parameters of the current debates would be recognisable to previous generations of media studies academics. The relationship between

'theory' and 'practice' and their role in pedagogy will continue to be revisited, probably indefinitely. Having created the divide, striving to bring them together can be seen as a virtue. The participants portray media studies as a critical analysis of the mass media pursued through an exploration of both theoretical approaches and practical, reflective production work that provides graduates with both short-term employment options and longer term personal and career development opportunities. However, it is the latter of these that permeates the academic discourse that emerges from the participant interviews.

2. What do the discursive practices of media studies reveal of the power relationships operating across media studies? How do media studies lecturers manage oppositional discourses?

Some of themes explored here are structured as oppositional discourses, for example; 'training'/'education', 'theory'/'practice', 'academy'/'industry', 'employability'/'critical citizenship', 'managerialism'/'collegiality'. Taking a Foucauldian approach to discourse, these are considered in terms of the underlying power and, by implication, ideology. Power here is not seen as a property of a formal hierarchical structure but as the possession of an ability to 'get things done'. This model sees power as unevenly distributed amongst the individuals, groups and institutions that enact media studies practices. This distribution of power can be mapped using the discourses that frame what is 'sayable' within a particular context; prospectus, course approval event, research paper, university policy, informal conversation.

The data here show that, in this sense, discourses do change over time across the axes identified above, as power can result in the ‘unsayable’ becoming ‘sayable’ and vice versa. However, the increasing prominence of a specific discourse (for example, ‘*employability*’) can be countered with a force in the opposite direction (in this case, perhaps, ‘*critical citizenship*’ (Johnson and Morris, 2010)) as other groups, individuals or institutions clarify and strengthen their position through the deployment of an oppositional discourse.

Media academic staff are required to operate across a range of modes and contexts, selecting and engaging in a variety of discursive practices. In doing this they operate at the interfaces between oppositional discourses and, by the nature of their role, deconstruct, question and problematise communicative practices. This places media academic staff in a significant position in relation to the balance of power relationships. The evidence here shows that media academic staff assimilate and deploy public and institutional discourses as necessary but can critically evaluate and subvert them to formulate an oppositional discourse. So, within media studies, ‘*employability*’ is preferred to ‘*vocational*’ as it can be semantically shifted from a discourse underpinned by a short-term instrumental view of higher education to a discourse of personal development and societal good.

Although there are a number of examples of this active management of power relationships in the data, there is also the puzzling anomaly of ‘*out there in the real world*’. Participants’ use of this subservient, ‘*two worlds*’ representation of education in general and the relationship between the media academy and the

media industries does not fit the model of active discourse management. The reasons for this are necessarily somewhat speculative, as the issue was not covered explicitly in the interviews. However, revisiting the participant identity may elucidate the issue as few (three) of the media academic staff interviewed have pursued their entire career as academics. The others have all spent some time working professionally in the media industries. This may point towards their use of '*out there in the real world*' as a means of maintaining and asserting the authenticity and relevance of those previous experiences.

3. How do the outcomes of this study relate to the existing and emerging research literature? How does this project relate to the emerging work that is being labelled *critical university studies*?

The conceptual and methodology approaches adopted in this study and outlined in Chapters Three and Four are not uncommon in the field of higher education studies and so it is reasonable to make comparisons between the results reported in the literature and the primary data presented here. The collected interview data demonstrate a set of concerns that a broadly similar starting point to those presented in the literature covering the sociology of higher education. The nature and purpose of higher education generally and media studies in particular has been a matter for investigation throughout the development of both. The critical evaluation of changing government education policy and its impact features throughout the literature. Each new wave of expansion/contraction in higher education has always been questioned

suspiciously. Fairclough's work on the marketisation of public discourse is an example of this:

"Institutions of higher education come increasingly to operate (under government pressure) as if they were ordinary businesses competing to sell their products to consumers" (Fairclough, 1993, p.143)

This was written against the backdrop of the 1992 Further and Higher Education Act that abolished the binary divide between polytechnics and universities.

However, it can be imagined that the same text was written, not twenty-two years ago but much more recently in response to the higher education reforms introduced by the 2010 Coalition government. Every wave of higher education reform seems to produce a '*hell in a handcart*' discursive response in the literature. Over the course of this study Williams' (2012a) promotion of the term '*Critical University Studies*' has gained traction alongside a number of dramatic critiques of the current state of UK higher education that position themselves in alignment with Williams. For example, Collini's *What Are Universities For?* (2012):

"...it is scarcely an exaggeration to say that the greater part of public discourse about universities at present reduces to the following dispiriting proposition: universities need to justify getting more money and the way to do this is by showing that they help to make more money." (ibid, p.x)

Whelan et al. write even more graphically in their study, *Zombies in the Academy: Living Death in Higher Education* (2013):

"The contributors break out of their fortified offices and bunkered lecture halls, and claw their way free of burial mounds of student marking, grant applications and committee minutes, equipped not with shotguns and fire axes, but with a radical metaphor and a critical eye." (p.1)

So the pattern is clear but has to be reconciled with the observation that, whatever problems arise and whether they have been solved or not, higher education has not suffered the apocalyptic collapse that many have felt would follow imminently with each wave of reforms. Acknowledging all the issues raised by the participants in this study, higher education appears to be still '*alive*'. Recruitment and participation rates remain strong, most institutions are financially secure; currently, no major English university has '*gone out of business*'. Research citations, international recruitment and prestige all show the UK as a major world provider of higher education.

The iterative nature of this process suggests that a more balanced approach to the field is required. Williams (ibid.) pitches *Critical University Studies* as taking an "*oppositional stance*" that "*focuses on the ways in which current practices serve power or wealth and contribute to injustice or inequality rather than social hope*" and that is the position taken by Collini and Whelan *et al.* but that appears to pre-judge the issues and to discount the not inconsiderable power of academics to not change their practices. Care is needed in making this connection as it is likely that Williams is not using the term '*power*' in the same way as it has been used in this study but the discrepancy remains. There is nothing in the participant responses to suggest that any of the participants support any of the recent public policy changes in higher education. However, the evidence here shows that they have developed strategies to assimilate, negotiate, moderate and dissipate policy changes through the sophisticated manipulation of the relevant discourses. It is these discursive practices that contribute to the stabilisation of higher education across repeated waves of public policy intervention.

This position locates this work as distinct from the emerging critical mass of *Critical University Studies*'. However, the term is attractive and its preoccupations are meaningful and timely and so further work to integrate the findings from this study into *Critical University Studies* could be fruitful.

4. To what extent are the conclusions of this study applicable to higher education beyond media studies and do they have useful implications for academic professional practice?

The small group of participants that have contributed to this qualitative study consists mostly of individuals embedded in media studies or who have experienced it as a student. Participants 02 (centralised Director of Teaching and Learning), 12 (Academic Registrar) and 13 (secondary school Headteacher) have experience of interacting with media studies practices but have a broader remit. However, they remain single subjective examples of professionals operating within a specific context. On this basis, considerable care would be required in taking the specific responses of the bulk of those who are or have been involved in media studies and extrapolating any conclusions to the entirety of the English higher education system. To do so uncritically would be inadvisable.

With these reservations in mind, a degree of confidence can be maintained in a limited extrapolation because of the congruence in the responses of these 'non-media studies' participants, 02, 12 and 13 with the responses of the other participants. Their perceptions, accessed through their discursive practices, were not identifiably different to the totality of responses. The range of literature that

underpins much of the analysis further supports this lack of differentiation.

Although some of it addresses the specifics of media education, much of the underpinning work is taken from the broad areas of the sociology of higher education, or sometimes even more generically, the sociology of organisations.

These factors would suggest that the conclusions here do have some worth beyond media studies. It is possible that the nature and relatively short history of media studies has resulted in a more contested rationale for the subject than in other more established subjects and disciplines but this is difficult to assert from the outside. However, it is reasonable to assume that the model of discursive practices established amongst this group of media studies academics is operating more widely across subjects, disciplines and institutions that are not directly represented in the sample.

8-5 Contribution to Practice and Suggested Further Investigations

The nature of the fieldwork in this study has resulted in a natural and on-going interaction between the researcher and professional practitioners in media higher education and beyond. All the participants warmly welcomed the project when they were approached to take part and all the invited participants contacted personally agreed to take part in the study. At the conclusion of the interviews a number of the participants expressed gratitude for the opportunity to talk at length about what they do. They were reminded of their opportunity to receive a copy of the study outcomes should they wish. A significant number

expressed an interest and have asked to be contacted when the project is concluded.

This suggests that the project is regarded as significant by the people most directly related to the material covered as, when asked at the end of the interview whether the discussion had covered the issues they thought were important, the participants all choose to amplify and clarify their earlier contributions rather than raise new topics for discussion. This was further reinforced with the acceptance and presentation of a work-in-progress paper at the *Political Studies Association, Media and Politics Group 2012* annual conference. This attracted a significant number of delegates to the session with a useful question and answer dialogue that reinforced the relevance of the material to professional practice and resulted in the identification of a number of additional participants.

Having established the relevance of the content to current professional practice, the outcomes provide a degree of explanation for what is likely to be only tacitly understood. Media studies professionals develop and acquire skills, tactics and strategies for '*getting things done*' that are probably sometimes implicit. There are few opportunities to stand back and reflect on the nature of these and how and why they work. This study can provide professional practitioners with some greater insight into why media studies is like it is and the opportunity to further reflect on their role in it.

In common with most research, this study opens up more questions than it answers. The processing of large amounts of transcription data necessarily

restricted the size of the participant group. The data collection is reasonably regarded as appropriate but there is always scope for both a broader and deeper group of participants. With additional data collection, it would be possible to do more comparative work across different settings and participant demographics.

Many of the themes developed in the analyses are capable of being developed to a greater depth and some of them could usefully be tracked across time. In many respects it is too early to fully appreciate the impact of the Coalition government's higher education policies on media studies and other academic fields and so a study that followed up on the issues covered here over the next five years would provide interesting additional insight.

This study focuses on the specifics of media studies in English higher education. This could be usefully expanded into a range of comparative studies that looked at the issues considered here in relation to practice elsewhere or other subject areas. A comparison with the situation in Scotland would be informative whatever the outcome of the independence referendum. There are also policy parallels with developments in Australia and so this might also form a useful comparative study.

Whilst there are many further avenues for exploration, the data presented here provides some fascinating insights into the perceptions of a group of highly motivated and highly professional individuals who are dedicated to making a difference to society through either education or the media, with or without public policy support. Talking to them was a great privilege.

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Appendix One - Overview of Interview Participants

Participant Number	Participant Type	Professional Role	Background
01	Central Teaching & Learning Support	Teaching Enhancement Developer	Broadcast journalist then academic, course leader, journalism, now central teaching & learning support
02	Central Teaching & Learning Support	Director of Teaching and Learning	Course design in a Welsh polytechnic, academic management, central teaching & learning at a post-92 university
03	Media Studies Graduate	University Media Technician	Media studies graduate from a post-92 university, media industry freelance film maker, university media technician
04	Media Academic Staff	Professor of Media	Media technician at 60s art school, first cohort of PCL course, academic career. Currently professor and director of research institute
05	Media Graduate	TV Industry Researcher	Changed to media studies from business studies. Media graduate from post-92 university
06	Media Academic Staff	Course Leader for BA Film and Television	Politics and Economics Graduate at Russell Group university. Producer/ Director TV and Radio 4, academic
07	Media Academic Staff	Lecturer in Film and Television	Actor and theatre director in Australia, BBC drama director, freelance director then academic
08	Media Academic Staff	Head of School of Media and Associate Dean	Graduate of post-92 university (Fine Art), Postgraduate at specialist art school, Lecturer, course leader, head of department
09	Media Academic Staff	Subject Leader for Media (FE and FdA)	Left school at 16, baking, wine & spirits trade. Mature student at pre-92 university, PGCE, lecturer at further education colleges
10	Media Academic Staff	Media/Design Module Tutor	Career academic, graduate from unaffiliated university, Postgraduate at post-92 university, lecturer, course leader at post-92 university
11	Media Academic Staff	Head of School of Media and Film	Career Academic, Politics and Sociology Graduate, PhD at post-92 universities, Lecturer in Wales
12	Central Registry and Quality Assurance	University Academic Registrar	Lecturer in German post-92 universities, moved into academic admin, quality assurance and central registry services. QAA institutional auditor
13	Advisor of Potential Students	Secondary School Head Teacher	Mathematics graduate (Russell Group university), RAF then Mathematics teacher, variety of school settings, head teacher
14	Media Graduate	Film Festival Organiser	Filmmaker, Festival Organiser
15	Media Academic Staff	Course Leader, BA Broadcast Journalism	Career academic, researcher, Russell Group graduate, Postgraduate researcher then academic staff
16	Media Academic Staff	Course Leader, Media and Politics	Politics graduate then into academia
17	Media Academic Staff	Former journalism lecturer	Journalist on local and national newspapers then masters degree and academia. Does a weekend shift on a national paper
18	Media Academic Staff	Principal Lecturer in Media Arts	Oxbridge English Literature Graduate, journalist, lecturer in Europe, Principal Lecturer and Sub-Dean, Quality
19	Media Academic Staff	Principal Lecturer in Media Arts	Chemistry Graduate, English literature postgraduate, BBC career, academic at two universities

Appendix Two – Project Information Sheet

University of Bedfordshire, Institute for Research in Education (IREd) Project: Undergraduate Media Studies in England: A Discourse Analysis Interview Consent – Information

Who are you? This research is being carried out by Peter Dean. I am a part-time research student in the Institute for Research in Education (IREd) at the University of Bedfordshire, studying for a professional doctorate in education (EdD). My supervisors are Professor Trevor Corner and Dr Marie-Pierre Moreau. In my full-time role, I am an Associate Dean at the University of Bedfordshire. My contact details are:

Peter Dean, Faculty of Creative Arts, Technologies and Science, University of Bedfordshire, Luton LU1 3JU	Telephone: 01582 743039 Email: peter.dean@beds.ac.uk
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What are you doing and why? This research study will gather evidence of the ways in which media studies courses in the UK are designed and delivered. I will do this by looking at documentary evidence and carrying out semi-structured interviews with a wide range of people who are involved with course design or who are impacted by the results; students, advisors, employers, lecturers, university administrators and managers etc. When I have collected the evidence I will analyse it for patterns of language use that demonstrate the ways in which people influence the development of media studies courses. This research and my conclusions will be developed into a doctoral thesis and submitted to the university for examination. If successful, this research could be published more widely and so lead to a better understanding of how courses are developed and so improve the process.

What will the research involve? This research is part of a professional doctorate and so involves research around my own professional practice. I am part of the process I am researching and so the participants have been identified by me as having significant influence on, and/or a major stake in, the outcome of media studies course development and are representative of the groups of people involved. I have approached you because I think your experiences, knowledge, ideas and opinions are important and I would like to understand these so that I can build a fuller understanding of the course development process from many viewpoints. You will participate in a 1-2-1 semi-structured interview. I will ask you a number of open-ended questions that are designed to allow you to give your views on media courses, the way they are designed and what their purpose should be. I would like you to give me your genuine views rather than what you think the answer “should” be. There are no right or wrong answers. The interview will probably take about 45-60 minutes.

I would like to make an audio recording of our conversation. This will be transcribed into text and both the audio recording and text will be kept on secure computer storage until the research is complete. It is important that your views are attributed to the role you play in the media studies field and so I would like to use this in my analysis. This means I cannot offer you a guarantee of confidentiality or anonymity. However, you may withdraw your consent at anytime during the interview. I will supply you with a copy of the recording and/or interview transcript if you wish. All contributions to this research are valuable and will be treated with respect. Your contribution will only be used for the purposes of this research study. If I think your contribution may be of use for other purposes I will always seek your explicit additional consent.

I am very grateful for your time and willingness to help. I hope you find the discussion interesting.

Appendix Three – Consent Form

University of Bedfordshire

Institute for Research in Education (IREd)

CONSENT FORM

Title of Project: Undergraduate Media Arts Curriculum Design in the UK:
A Discourse Analysis

Researcher: Peter Dean, research student, peter.dean@beds.ac.uk, 01582 743039

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving reason.
3. I agree to take part in the above study.

☐☐☐

Please tick box

Yes

No

4. I agree to the interview being audio recorded
6. I agree that my data gathered in this study may be securely stored until this research study is complete

☐☐☐☐

Name of Participant

Date

Signature

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature

Appendix Four

Interviewers Prompts (Participant 16)

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduce self• Confirm consent• Permission to record• Purpose of study	Date/Time:
	Setting:
	Respondent:
	Observations:

Can you tell me what your current role is and a little about what you do?

Can you give me some of the background to how your career progressed to this point?

What's the purpose of media/journalism education in English universities?

You're involved in a Politics and Media course – how is that distinctive from other media courses?

Would you make a distinction between media and journalism education?

You've been a member of academic staff at different types of university. What differences have you found?

Is media/journalism education vocational? What does vocational mean in this context? Should media/journalism education be vocational? Does employability mean the same thing?

Have you been involved in designing a media or journalism course? Can you tell me about that experience? How did you go about it?

How did you decide what should go into the course elements you were designing?

Is there anything that constrained your design? Did you have to leave anything important out or include things that you didn't think were appropriate?

Did you include any practice-based activities in the course? What was the purpose of these? What's your take on the theory/practice debates?

How does the quality assurance process work here? What do you have to do if you want to change something?

What do you think the impact of the new arrangements for the funding of higher education will be on media courses?

Is there anything else you think I should know that would help me with this study?

Appendix Five – Ethics Approval

From: Michelle Miskelly <Michelle.Miskelly@beds.ac.uk>
To: Peter Dean <Peter.Dean@beds.ac.uk>
Date: 7 November 2011 11:45
Subject: Re: Fwd: Revised Ethics proposal...

Dear Peter

Your research proposal, "Undergraduate Media Arts in England: A Discourse Analysis", has now been through ethical scrutiny and has been approved by the acting IRED ethics chair. I have been asked to forward you the comments of one of the reviewers for consideration, please find attached.

Your approval code to commence data collection is **2011EDC011**. A letter to this effect will be placed in the internal post in due course.

Regards

Michelle Miskelly
Field Administrator (Research)
& Faculty Administrator
PI.07 Faculty Office
University of Bedfordshire
Polhill Avenue
Bedford MK41 9EA
T: 01234 793113
F: 01234 793031

Appendix Six – Example Full Transcript – Participant 15

VOICE FILE NAME: <redacted>

Key:

I = Interviewer

R = Respondent

s.l. = sounds like

Short pause (...) – up to 3 seconds

Medium pause (....) up to 5 seconds

Long pause (.....) up to 10 seconds

(high tone) high pitch speech

(softly spoken) softly spoken

(confused) confused

(angry)

(happy)

(surprised)

I Okay so what I'm just looking for is urm (...) urr just your, your views on things, it's not any particular line on here (softly spoken) just...

R Yeah. Okay (softly spoken)

I ...what you think (...) would be most help to me. (...) Urm on any of this stuff. (...) Just to kick it off really and so I've got the context (...) can- could you just give me some of the (...) urm (...) details of your current role, what y- what your...

R Yeah. (high tone)

I ...role in the organisation is at the moment?

R Yes. I'm programme leader of the (...) undergraduate degree in broadcast journalism which is a three year (high tone) BA honours degree. (...) And it's accredited by the BJTC.

I Right. (softly spoken)

R I've been programme leader (angry) since urm August 2011 and before that I was on a career break for- on maternity leave for urr two or three years (...) and I was head of an MA course in communication studies. So urm my role (high tone) (...) here, here...

I Yeah, yeah.

R ...yes here urm (...) my role (...) now (angry) (...) urm involves managing the, the team of people who provide the modules on the course, I oversee the curriculum (...) urm I liaise with the students, make sure that they're happy and we have staff-student committees urm (...) just make sure that the, the (...) the whole degree programme is being delivered efficiently and effectively,

I Fine (softly spoken) (...) okay how, how big is it? Just for the [slight laugh] if there's a scale, or a scale of things? (happy)

R How big is it okay. We have- Okay (high tone) we have currently about 140 students so urm the last two years we have an intake of 50 students...

I Okay (softly spoken)

R ...per year, before that it was a bit lower. (....) Urm so yes there's about 140 students (...) and they have to achieve quite highly (high tone) we have an entry requirement of ABB...

I Yeah. (softly spoken)

R ...So we get (...) urm some very able and capable students.

I Indeed yes. Yes. (high tone) (softly spoken) Urm (...) so (....) the characteristic of that recruitment is (....) 'cause you would expect with that kind of UCAS profile from...

R How do you mean the characteristic? (confused)

I Urm so what, what they've done- (...) sorry, sorry not making any sense 'cause I'm making it up as I go along (happy)...

R [slight laugh]

I ...urm (...) so th-the-, their UCAS scores are typically in A levels, they been- they've come from school rather than 6th- urr urr s- college of FE (high tone) you know th-?

R Yes, yes, yes (high tone) so th- so the typical- typ-

I Th-there is a stereotype (...) k-kind of students and I wonder how much they fit that stereotype? (confused)

R ...the typical candidate urm (...) yeah (.....) okay the typ- the typical candidate has, has- is achieving ABB or, or higher...

I Mm (softly spoken)

R ...in A levels, we have (...) certain A levels that we sort of urr would prefer them to have a (...) combination of (...) urm tending to be English, History urm rather than you know if (...) w-we do take people with arts, theatre studies all that kind of stuff but we prefer (...) a sort of balanced combination of those things...

I Yeah. (softly spoken)

R ...Urm in recent years we have s-stopped (...) urm (...) we, we've had more of an emphasis on taking students that have got a very strong academic (angry) background and a very strong academic interest in (...) journalism as well as a practical one.

I Right. (softly spoken)

R So urr in previous years we might have urm been more interested in candidates who said they were, were interested in sports journalism...

I Okay (softly spoken)

R ...urm and have had some science d- science A levels but more recently (...) the degree programme itself h-has got more of an academic (high tone) emphasis, it's 50% urm theoretical / critical and 50% practical...

I Right. (softly spoken)

R ...because we are trying to equip students- well, I) we're urr a Russell Group University...

I Yeah (softly spoken)

R ...(...) urm and we, we have research-led teaching (high tone)...

I Yeah. (softly spoken)

R ...and 2) we are trying to equip- make sure that we equip students not just with vocational (high tone) skills when they come out but that they have the skills to urm (...) be able to critically reflect and be what we call 'thinking' journalists. (softly spoken)

I Right okay (softly spoken)

R So that's reflected in our re- our entry requirements...

I Mm (softly spoken)

R ...and the type of students that we take. So they do (high tone) tend to have A levels, we do (high tone) urm ha- make a conscious (...) effort to try and have a balance of (...) urm (...) urr gender and people from diverse backgrounds. (surprised) We encourage people, very strongly to apply through the Access to <university> Scheme (high tone) (surprised)...

I Oh okay (high tone) (surprised)

R ...which is a scheme which is open to people who (...) urm there's a number of cas- urm a number of (...) elements that you have to satisfy (angry) to be able to apply through it for instance that you're the first person in your family to (...) go to university or that you're from a school (surprised) that (...) doesn't achieve a certain...

I Yeah (softly spoken)

R ...level of grade so your (...) s-sort of at a disadvantage.

I Under represented (high tone) postcodes, that sort of thing. (softly spoken)

R That kind of thing. (angry) Urm and if you (...) apply through that you have to complete a project and you get a lower offer. It's not actually (high tone) that much of a lower offer but it does give people a break and give them the ability (...) to get in...

I Mm (softly spoken) yeah (high tone)

R ...with slightly lower grades. (angry)

I Okay.

R And urm (.....) we do take people with B-Techs, (surprised) th- it's the equivalent of the A level...

I Yes (softly spoken)

R ...urr for [0:05:04.3] UCAS points.

I Yeah sure (softly spoken) (...) okay (...) great that's (...) sets the scene a bit. Just out of interest (...) really urm interested in how your career progressed. (...) How did-how did-

R [slight laugh]

I ...how did you get [slight laugh] what did you start doing an-

R Okay.

I ...how did it go to, to doing your thing here?

R I'm probably- I'm probably (high tone) quite an odd case although probably everybody says that to you but urm (...) I haven't ever been a journalist. (...) I actually came straight out of urm a degree in media (...) urr media and communications and I started working as a researcher...

I Right (softly spoken)

R ...for- looking at urm (...) audience research mostly to inform the regulatory bodies and the Broadcasting Standards Commission and the Independent Television at the time...

I Mm (...) mm.

R ...I also worked a lot on urm (...) urr a three year study that was looking at use of the internet when it first started and we're talking in sort of '99 here. Urm t-to look at people's use of technology and how that was going to, to work out. Urm (...) I then urr so I was full time (angry) researcher, I then urr became involved with a professor who urm started a new research centre which was into European political communications and as part (high tone) of that I did a (...) part time PhD whist working full time (angry)...

I Right.

R ...urm (...) in the area of the European public's fear (angry) and my research topic was urm investigating how newspapers cover the EU.

I Oh okay (high tone) (surprised)

R And so as part of that I interviewed a lot of journalists...

I Yeah (high tone)

R ...I was, I was (...) I was matching up what (high tone) the coverage is...

I Mm

R ...by content analysis with interviews with journalists.

I Right.

R And so that sparked my research (...) interest in (...) journalism (confused)...

I Mm.

R ...although my research interests are quite broad and (...) urr at the beginning they were- it was audience research and I, I, I wrote quite a lot about violence on television...

I Mm (high tone) mm.

R ...but now (...) it, it's now more (...) political communications and journalism and so (...) urm (...) once my full time (angry) research career changed (angry) in 2007 to become a lecturer (surprised) which was a kind of natural thing because the grants that I had and w-was working on had, had changed and the centre that I'd been running for...

I Mm (softly spoken)

R ...(...) five or six years (high tone) urm (...) the urm key person in that moved to a different university. (surprised) Urm (...) I got into lecturing (...) and (...) as you know all I- all lecturers have to have an administrative role and so I was running an MA course and then the next administrative role I took on (...) probably (high tone) well in la- in large part (high tone) due to my research (...) background...

I Yeah (softly spoken)

R ...in researching journalism (...) was (...) managing the (...) the broadcast journalism.

I Oh I see yes. Okay (high tone)

R And I, and I teach on it as well.

I Yeah (high tone) of course, yeah. So actually quite, quite an academic route (...) to it?

R Very academic (high tone) route (surprised) urm (...) I'm one of (...) I'm probably (high tone) the only (angry) person on the programme who hasn't got any (...) journalism experience (...) we have urm (...) two (...) other (...) well th-there's three other academic (angry) (...) people who are in urr academic posts who are lecturers who teach (confused) (...) who have journalism experience (...) in a quite m-minor way that they did it for urr a few years. (angry)

- I Yeah [0:08:03.9] [over speaking] (softly spoken)**
- R Then we also have teaching (high tone) fellows who have been at a very high (high tone) level in journalism for instance <colleague>.
- I Mm (softly spoken)**
- R ...who was the, the editor of <BBC News programme>, <colleague> who was...
- I Mm (softly spoken)**
- R ...urr is a very distinguished and urr had a long run- t- long (...) career (angry) in journalism...
- I Yes (softly spoken)**
- R ...had set (high tone) up the, the broadcast journalism degree (...) urm and urr <colleague> who w-worked in radio (...) for a long time. And we also bring in (...) experts from radio t-to teach as well...
- I Yes (softly spoken)**
- R ...So we've got a sort of balance and that reflects th-the balance of modules on the programme (...) and the balance between academic and, and practical...
- I Right (softly spoken)**
- R ...skills.
- I Would it be an over simplification to say (...) those people that come in with the journalism background tend to do the practical (.....) modules?**
- R Urm... (surprised)
- I (...) Or is it- does it- was it mixed up? (confused)**
- R No it's mixed (angry) (...) i- it's- it depends whether they're pursuing an academic career.
- I Right.**
- R Urm so (...) urm (.....) three of them (...) have an academic career b- urr I forgot to mention <colleague> (confused) who is the documentary lecturer and he, he spent years in documentary and...

I Right.

R ...but, h- has a PhD (confused)...

I Okay. Yeah, yeah, so it's all [0:09:09.3] [over speaking] [s.l. mixed up now it's personal,] yeah fine.

R ...and s- research career, so yeah i- it's mixed up really. Yeah.

I Okay. (...) Right. Right urm (...) okay s- so to get you to the meat of it then we are kind of- what I want to do is start off actually quite a high (confused) level of abstraction and then get down to the detail.

R Yeah.

I Urm so it's interesting to actually just ask everybody straight out (happy) [slight laugh] what's the point of me doing journalism courses in universities? (softly spoken) Why do we have them at all (...) from your point of view?

R [sigh] (...) gosh that's a- quite a tricky question. (happy) (.....) Well there's a demand (high tone) ...

I Right.

R ...clearly. (.....) Urm (...) and (...) from the point of view from a Russell Group research-led university (...) we (...) have some of the leading academics in the field (...) who (...) are researching public communications and political communications and how the media (high tone) has an impact on society. (angry) (...) So urm (...) we have quite a lot to say (high tone) (...) and a lot of knowledge about urm the effects of journalism in society (high tone) and as part of being an academic I would say we have a responsibility to pass some of that knowledge on to future journalists.

I Right. (softly spoken) (.....) Well that's alright (high tone) isn't it (happy) [slight laugh]

R Yeah (high tone)

I Off th- the spur of the moment. (happy) [slight laugh]

R Yeah (high tone) (...) sounds quite good.

I It does yeah. (high tone) And, and (softly spoken) (...) could certainly use that. Urm (...) what urr and urr of course p-part of the reason I wanted to talk to you urm

(...) because I'm talking to various people in various settings (...) is that of course this, this is journalism in, in a Russell Group University (angry) ...

R Yes.

I ...and you've kind of touched on it a bit but let's (...) just expand on it, maybe urm (...) on how a Russell Group university approaches this subject area?

R Yeah.

I Y-y-y-i-

R Urm yeah (high tone) I mean-

I How does it [0:11:04.3] [over speaking]

R ...ur I mentioned earlier that our, our degree programme is a- is 50% a- (high tone) what would (...) broadly term academic but we like to think of it as urr critically reflective (surprised)...

I Yeah (softly spoken)

R ...so we're thinking (angry) about (...) for instance the role of journalism in society. The effect (high tone) of what- of what urr (...) how (...) journalism (...) i- works in practice on urm (...) how the world gets reported? (high tone)

I Hmm (confused)

R Urm (...) and there's a balance of that (...) with (...) the practical side. Urm there's also you know quite a lot of reflection about ethics, about law (...) urm (...) and so I suppose we differ (angry) in that we're not (...) just, (...) we don't consider ourselves to be a training course (...) we are not (...) solely concerned with having somebody who can go out (...) and press all the right buttons and put the right report together we want them to be able to think about why (angry) they're doing that, how they're doing that and the implications of that.

I Yeah. (...) Okay. (....) I'm sorry to drag it out but (....) why, why is that important (...) for them in the future?

R Why is that important for the student? (high tone)

I Yeah. (....) Because urm a- I mean, th- th- because you might get them coming in saying "I want to learn how to push the buttons and....?"

R Well (...) students who come here are very well- very aware (angry) of the competitive (high tone) nature of the, the entrance process to get into this course that you have to be urm (.....) you know you have to be a-achieving high A levels and those students really (...) could do anything with their (...) their urm (...) their choices of what degrees (high tone) to go on urm and so (...) urr I suppose (...) i-it's very clear to them that the type of (...) degree that they're going to be taking isn't just a training course and if they want that they should go somewhere else (...) because (...) we make it explicit to them in open days and in all our literature (...) that we are (...) attempting to produce thinking journalists and that they will (...) have to deal (angry) with the multitasking of going between writing essays, being critically reflective analysing urr news output to (...) producing news output and that they're expected to switch b- between that and that it's a very demanding course. So, if a student doesn't think that that's what they want (...) then urm (...) they wouldn't apply to our,,,

I **Right.**

R ...(...) our course. I think they'd go somewhere else? (confused)

I **Yes okay. (high tone) (...) Right (softly spoken) urm w- (high tone) (...) urm (...) looking across a range of different kind of courses in the- the subject is obviously (softly spoken) quite broad and...**

R Yeah. (high tone)

I **...the courses are quite- (...) vary quite a lot. (...) Urm (...) and there certainly, I talk to quite a lot of people who are involved with journalism courses and other people who are involved with media courses more generally...**

R Yeah.

I **...media production, (...) TV production, all sorts of things really (softly spoken) a-and (...) I'm, (...) I'm wondering (...) wondering how (angry) interchangeable (...) this process is across these things or whether th- whether there is a distinctive (angry) something distinctive about journalism courses or something distinctive about media courses or is it just a (...) continuum or...? (softly spoken) Do you think there's something different about journalism courses? (high tone)**

R Different about journalism courses in comparison to what? I-it-

- I** Well in a f- urr urm (.....) because (...) there are lots of courses out there, things like media studies...
- R** Yeah.
- I** ...media production, and there are film (high tone) studies courses of course [0:14:35.3] [unclear] ...
- R** Yeah.
- I** ...urr (...) urr (...) I'm not saying there is (angry) 'cause maybe th- maybe there isn't I'm just trying to find out whether or not (...) people involved with it see (...) themselves heavily compartmentalised (angry) within that? (...) Or whether it's actually just [0:14:49.8] [over speaking]
- R** No (angry) I mean the approach (...) the approach we have (...) at the <department name> as opposed (confused) to urr just my degree is that the students who are studying journalism (...) get in their first year a very (...) broad (...) based grounding in communications, the history of communications...
- I** Right.
- R** ...and the context of communications. So they (...) come out of their first year, yes (high tone) with some practical skills because they do do some journalism and they do urm a lot of camera and editing and they, they learn that side of things, they begin (high tone) to do that. But (...) they take two core modules which help them to understand why it's important to reflect on (...) the role of journalism in society...
- I** Right.
- R** ...in a broader context of looking...
- I** Okay.
- R** ...at communications, how journalism has developed over, over the last hundred years to be where it is at now (confused) ...
- I** Mm (softly spoken)
- R** ...and (...) in comparison to other media (confused) and they do that alongside the other students because we have three degree courses, we have communicat- sorry we have four, we have broadcast journalism...
- I** Mm (softly spoken)

R ...journalism and media which has no practical element to it, it- at all and is urr a bit traditional I suppose – media studies (softly spoken) degree (high tone) we have cinema and photography and we have new media which is internet...

I Oh okay. (high tone)

R ...So if you're a student applying to the <department name>, you have a (...) a quite clear choice...

I Yes.

R ...urm and so in second and third year as a journalism student (...) you are (...) specialising.

I Yes. (softly spoken) So sorry, I (...) you maybe said but, but just to be clear (...) so when they're doing those modules in (...) the first year...

R Yeah.

I ...they're shared across (confused) multiple programmes?

R Yeah (high tone) so all students (...) urr m- most (high tone) of the students from those four courses will be on those modules some of them urr th-there's, there's a couple, there's three core modules and (...) urr students take two out of those three, but those three core modules are all principally concerned (angry) with communications in general...

I Right.

R ...whether it's...

I Okay. (high tone)

R ...the political side of communications or-? (confused)

I So the philosophy (...) here then would be that there is a- there is a common core around media and communication?

R Yes there's s- certainly (high tone) the philosophy is there is, there's a common academic s-

I [0:16:54.2] [over speaking]

R ...core and strand...

- I Yeah. (high tone)**
- R ... (...) and traditional (angry) history of com- communication studies...
- I Yes. Urm that all students (...) should, should be aware of?**
- R Yeah (high tone)
- I Before they go on to specialise (...) in a particular area? (softly spoken)**
- R Yeah. (high tone) Yeah or as part of specialised. (confused)
- I Urr part of specialising yeah, yeah. (...) Okay (softly spoken) (...) good (...) urm (...) so some of the (...) words that as I say I was trying to unpack some of these words that people use...**
- R Hmm mm (high tone)
- I ...urr around some of these courses and the first one I'll try is vocational (confused) (...) what's (high tone) that then?**
- R Vocational (high tone) is not (...) i- v- vocational to me means something that equips you to go out and (...) urm (...) have a skill (high tone) that enables you to do a job. Urr usually (...) practical I think (high tone) (...) urm (...) and it's not a term (confused) which we would use or associate our degree with. Urm (...) we do incorporate some teaching of vo- what could be considered vocational skills as part of the degree (...) urm but it's not something we would (...) promote in literature or- (confused)
- I Right (softly spoken) because?**
- R Urm (high tone) (...) because that not really the core of the degree.
- I Right.**
- R Urm (...) even when we are teaching the practical skills, for journalism (...) we are very aware that in the (...) world that the students are going to go into (...) they need to be able to (...) show how (surprised) those skills can be applied to other vocations than journalism because they A) might not want to go into journalism when they come out (...) B) might not get a job (high tone) in journalism (...) or might end up doing something which is related (high tone) to journalism (...) but isn't exactly journalism. So they need to h-have transferable skills.
- I Right. (softly spoken)**

- R So you know when we are teaching them urr how to a-arrange interviews (confused) you know that's, that's how to contact people and communicate (high tone) effectively when we're teaching them to urm balance their workload, that's multiskilling and, and time management...
- I **Yes. (high tone)**
- R ...urm so (.....) yeah (high tone)
- I **Okay. So is that (...) that idea of transferable skills and maybe (...) going, having a wider range of possibilities when you graduate than (...) than just the title of the course implies...**
- R Yeah (high tone)
- I **...th- is that a conversation you would have with people thinking about becoming- (confused) about coming on your course? (softly spoken)**
- R Yes (high tone)
- I **Yeah.**
- R Yeah p-people do ask...
- I **Yeah (softly spoken)**
- R ..you know well, you know w- (...) urr it's a big (high tone) concern (angry) of students at the moment obviously...
- I **Of course if it. (softly spoken) (high tone)**
- R ...with £9,000 fees (angry) urm, coming on a course which is urm (.....) you know it's quite specialised (...) and also is going to prepare them for going into an industry which (...) at the moment all you hear in the media is there's no jobs in journalism (high tone) so you know...
- I **[slight laugh] (softly spoken)**
- R ...the people coming up "well w- what about jobs in journalism" (high tone) and you know? (...) To start with we have a very good success rate and a quite g-g- high employability rate (high tone)...
- I **Yes. (softly spoken)**

R ...but (...) you know we assure (high tone) people that yes people go on and do other things so we have people who go into teaching (high tone) we have people who go into PR...

I Mm (softly spoken)

R ...urm people who go in a-and d-do all sorts of other things and the, the (...) urr- (confused)

I And people's concept- (high tone) preconceptions of what (...) constitutes journalism is probably narrower than (...) the reality?

R Yes (high tone) yes, I don't think they quite understand you know obviously t- lots of them th-think at the beginning 'I want to be a presenter or I want to urr be on air.' (high tone)

I Yes, yes (softly spoken)

R But (...) very quickly-

I Urr urr-

R ...they, they realise that actually that's not for them or that (...) urr the other bits are perhaps more exciting (high tone) or challenging, or whatever.

I Yes (...) yeah, yeah (softly spoken) (...) okay urm that's-okay that's good, great for the sort of (...) general (...) [0:20:32.3] [background noise] [s.l. side] as I say was getting from the general to the specific and (...) urr from, from certainly from where you were talking to start it sounded like (...) you've actually probably had quite a lot of involvement in the (...) design and approval of (...) getting courses approved and (...) that kind of process? (confused)

R Urr (...) just modules within the course, yeah, yeah.

I Modules yeah. (softly spoken) Yeah urm so urr just interested to talk about how that, how that process was for you, w- (...) urr (...) if you, if you (...) involved in course design, how do you go about (....) that process? Just tell me about that how that process (confused) has worked?

R Do you mean for modules of do you mean for the (...) the programme? (confused)

- I Well (high tone) (...) modules up to programme urr if that makes sense? (confused)**
- R Right urm (.....) well (confused) (.....) I mean we ha- urr we urr th-the programme here has been running for over 15 years...
- I Right. (confused)**
- R ...Urm so (...) has (...) got a good (...) basis urr in, in-
- I It's bedded-in.**
- R It's bedded-in (high tone) urm although it has undergone changes in recent years and we are very well aware (high tone) that we need to reflect changes in journalism...
- I Right, right (softly spoken)**
- R ...industry itself which is one of the major challenges because it's changing (surprised) so quickly...
- I It is yes (surprised)**
- R ...and it's always changing (surprised) (...) and particularly in recent years it- it's changing. (...) So a lot of the changes (high tone) that we've made in recent years which has happened urm (...) kind of just the year before I took over as head of the programme (high tone) (...) urm we reviewed all of our undergraduate programmes within the ICS...
- I Mm (softly spoken)**
- R ,,and urr (...) underwent a curriculum review...
- I Yeah (softly spoken)**
- R ...the curriculum review (high tone) was done on a basis of committee (angry) for e- urr a committee was formed for each degree...
- I Yeah (surprised)**
- R ...urm (...) which (...) identified (...) areas that needed developing or needed changing. Urm and it was (high tone) down to not just content but also things like choice, so in the past we had a set curriculum and students had (...) no element of choice, they were all core modules, that's what they did for three years (...) but in line with other degrees in the university, we then introduced the element of choice from second year students who were able to take options. At the moment for the broadcast journalism it's just within our department...

I Mm (confused)

R ...because (...) we are urm (...) concerned that (...) that students don't urm branch out too (high tone) much so that they...

I Yes.

R ...come out with a bit of a dog's dinner of a degree...

I Sure. Yes. (high tone)

R ...rather than (...) something which does (high tone) equip them to become a journalist.

I Oh! (high tone) (....) Sorry I was (softly spoken) not going to make use of external knowledge but (...) but does urr s-so do these students have access to the <university name> Elective, big elective? (confused)

R They don't have- they don't have access to the Electives...

I No.

R ...they have access to options within the department, but we do have (...) urr it's part of (...) the broadcast journalism degree (...) there are certain (....) certain topics (high tone) and themes which have to be- we consider as a, as a programme and as a programme team and that's based on the expert knowledge coming from people who have been in journalism, we have an industry advisor who is like an external examiner basically who advises us. (...) Urr we also have constant contact with industry urr through TAs that come in urr teaching assistants...

I Right yeah (high tone)

R ...who are practicing journalists...

I Yeah (high tone)

R ...who we get i- to come in (...) and, and talk to us, visiting speakers you know (softly spoken) all sorts of people who we consult (angry) as well as the BJTCs...

I Yes.

R ...who have certain guidelines of things that we have (angry) to include in the curriculum, so for instance urm (...) British politics is taught at first year and that's taught by the politics department here (high tone)...

I Right.

R ...law (angry) media law is taught in the third year and that's taught in the law department here because they're the experts (high tone)...

I Yes, yes, yes. (high tone)

R ...in those, in those areas.

I Okay.

R Media (high tone) law does crop into our other...

I Of course yeah.

R ...(...) modules delivered within the <department name>, but th- we, we make sure there is urr a core module that runs across all of third year so that when people come out (...) with a degree (angry) they are well aware of [slight laugh] of all the things that aren't going to get them into too much trouble. (happy)

I Hmm (softly spoken)

R So (high tone) urm (...) th-there are certain things that we include (angry) urm we've changed the element of, of, of choice (.....) urm (.....) and I think I described how we do it really (high tone) everything has to go through a, a teaching and learning committee (...) and takes (...) approximately (...) urm between 6 months and a year to implement so we have to think about these things (...) well in advance.

I Yes. (...) Yeah. (...) Urm so (...) so teaching and learning committee is that urr (...) you said departmental or faculty (softly spoken) (confused)

R It's- Depart- Departmental level that then reports to a faculty level.

I Okay (softly spoken)

R But things get urm (...) rubber stamped at the, at the departmental level, (angry) they go through the director of learning and teaching who holds a committee, all (high tone) heads of programmes are on the committee and various other positions.

I Right (surprised)

R And urm if you want to change anything about a module (...) urm such as the type of assessment of the amount of lectures you're going to give or (...) the curriculum of that module...

I **Right.**

R ...it has to (...) go beyon- before that committee who considers that that is the right...

I **Yes. (...) Okay.**

R ...thing to do.

I **(...) Urm that sounds a very (...) peer based (...) process?**

R That, that element of it is yes.

I **Yeah so is, is there a sort of professional (...) direct quality directorate (high tone) type function within the university that (...) sort of oversees these processes, or?**

R Well there's the faculty level (...) teaching and learning committee. (confused)

I **Yeah but who- who- is that, but that, that that's academics? (confused)**

R Yes. (high tone)

I **Yes.**

R So you're talking about-

I **I mean they are sort of professional support staff in their (...) quality (confused) area? (high tone)**

R Such as? (confused)

I **Urr- that probably means 'no' (high tone) which is-**

R Ah yeah, yes (high tone)

I **'Cause some universities (high tone) have urr an, an entire army (high tone) of people...**

R Yeah.

I **...who are (...) urm not academic (high tone) staff...**

R Yeah (high tone)

I ...(...) but are professional staff...

R Yeah (high tone)

I ...urm and do nothing other than (...) oversee those processes? (confused)

R We have administrative (high tone) staff who are on that committee and who are part of it so urm (...) yes (high tone) there's somebody who i- [sigh] I can't remember her name (angry) but she's the- she, she's (...) what you're talking about the, the urr administrative e-equivalent of the faculty level direct- director of learning and teaching and she will be at all meetings. So if we say "well urm (...) you know we want to take chairs action to change the exam on this because it's going to do something"...

I Mm (softly spoken)

R ...you know she'll advise us of the guidelines and policies as to whether we're allowed...

I Right okay yes...

R ...to do that.

I ...okay that's the kind of thing meant, yeah.

R Yeah (high tone) yeah, yeah. So yes we have those people, yeah, we have them at urr urr (...) urr departmental (high tone) level (...) yes there is somebody as well. (...) Urm (...) but the faculty level person tends to be there at the committee...

I Yeah (softly spoken)

R ,,I-level meetings. So sort of political (high tone) decisions and strategic decisions are taken by academic members of staff...

I Yes.

R ...and then we say "this is what we want to do..."

I Yes. (softly spoken)

R "...can we do it?"

I Right.

- R And they tell us whether we can by the rules.
- I **Yes (softly spoken) yes. If you want to run units with 23½ credits on it (happy)...**
- R Yeah, yeah (high tone) yeah that kind of thing yeah (happy)
- I **...and they say “oh no you can’t do that.” (happy) [slight laugh]**
- R Yeah, yeah, yeah (high tone). We want to make this module open to students outside the <department name>.
- I **Right.**
- R “No you can't do that because x, y, z.”
- I **Yeah (high tone) (softly spoken)**
- R Or you can do that but you’d have to have a cap and (...) you know, things like that. (high tone)
- I **Yes okay. (...) Urm alright (high tone) (softly spoken) (...) and (.....) I mean do you think that urr do you think that’s, that’s now that’s reflected on- is that a good process, (high tone) does it, does that process work well for you? As a good way of doing it?**
- R Urm (.....) yes (high tone) it does and it works (...) it works well urm for the <department name>.as a whole because it means that I'm aware of what (.....) modules (...) and subjects are being taught on other degrees (high tone) within the institute, so I'm aware of how my (...) programme (...) differs...
- I **Mm (confused) (softly spoken)**
- R ...that helps me in, in, in making sure that you know in this environment we all need to make sure that our programmes are distinctive enough to be recruiting different students...
- I **Yes (high tone) (softly spoken)**
- R ...urm it (...) it also helps us to make sure that we are not duplicating (...) any teaching (high tone) so it makes, it makes (...) us aware (high tone) (...) that urm for instance these core modules, you know...
- I **Mm (softly spoken)**

R ...urr I urr I need to know what's going on in those core modules so that my team are not repeating that in second and third year (high tone) so yeah it's a very inclusive (...) urm (...) process.

I **Yes.**

R (...) And I think urr a very worthwhile one. Although can be quite frustrating 'cause it takes (high tone) so much (confused) time. But the (...) urr it makes you urm (...) you know (...) what we, what we do at the end of each module (...) is we get the students to assess that module with feedback forms (...) but we also do what's called a module review.

I **Yes.**

R And I have to do a programme review every year...

I **Yes.**

R ...as well.

I **Yes (softly spoken)**

R And so as part (high tone) of that you're reflecting (angry) on what worked well, what could be done better, what needs to be developed, what needs to be (...) added, based on what's going on in the industry, based on what I've been researching...

I **Yeah (softly spoken)**

R ...and you then make additions and changes (surprised) which ultimately improve the programme and the fact that you have to think about that in advance is actually a really good thing.

I **Mm mm mm (softly spoken) a-and what happens to that report, does that go to this teaching and learning thing? (softly spoken)**

R Yes (high tone)

I **Yeah.**

R That goes to the teaching and learning committee and is, is approved or action points (angry) you know if there were any problems th- you would, you would have to be saying what the action points are (...) to solve those problems.

I **Mm (softly spoken)**

R They take into consideration those reports, the programme report takes into consideration the external adv- examiner's advice.

I Yeah (softly spoken)

R And the industry (...) advisor's advice as well.

I Yes (softly spoken) (.....) right (high tone)

R So it's really like a health (high tone) check.

I Yes.

R Once a year.

I Yes. (...) And that forms the basis of the response to external examiner? (softly spoken)

R Yes. (high tone)

I Yes. (...) okay (softly spoken) 'Cause obviously well it's interesting 'cause (...) because nationally there are the (...) QAA (.....) sort of guidelines on all of this stuff but then every, every university sort of kind of interprets them in their own way.

R Yeah.

I Interesting. Urm (...) some people (...) some places (softly spoken) it varies quite a lot I find. S-some places embrace the full richness of- (happy)

R [slight laugh]

I [slight laugh] administration more than others. (happy) [slight laugh]

R Yeah, (high tone) yeah.

I Yeah. (...) Urm some people love it. (softly spoken) Urm right okay (...) urr (.....) urr now is it, just run this past you, it's- 'cause this is something, something somebody (high tone) else said to me (...) when I was having this conversation, (...) was that they (...) they were lamenting (...) how y- (.....) course design had become a process of (...) lots of (...) frameworks and initiatives and (...) things

we ought to try (...) and there was very little or, or decreasing amount of conversation about (...) the stuff (angry) is what they called it (happy) [slight laugh]

R Right (happy) [slight laugh]

I And by which urr I, I d- I took to mean the (...) the content (...) so it was becoming a urm a more bureaucratic process.

R (...) Urm I c- urr- (confused)

I Do you recognise anything in that? (high tone)

R Not really that might (surprised) (high tone) be because (...) as I say I've only been involved in teaching since 2007 so I haven't seen a massive change. (confused)

I That's (softly spoken) interesting yes (surprised) 'cause this was someone had b- someone who had been teaching a lot longer than that, yeah.

R Yeah (...) urm (...) I mean (high tone) like I just said there is a level of bureaucracy (angry) urm (...) and (...) in some of that there is some (...) ticking of boxes such as when you're doing your module review, (...) I have to, at the end of it say how that module contributes to a set of key urm characteristics which are taken from QAA benchmarks are taken from the university strategy (high tone)...

I Yes. (high tone)

R ...Urm and so urm (...) in that sense (.....) that's some- a way of thinking about a module which you may not have thought about before. (...) However (.....) actually it's quite easy to tick those (...) urm (...) those key characteristics [telephone ringing] and do you mind if I just get that, answer that?

I Of course not.

R [Hello (...) okay can I get back to you on it cause I'm just in an interview (...) okay sorry bye (high tone)]

I Sorry.

R [slight laugh] Urr yeah so th-the those, those key- (...) they don't hinder (angry) how you have to- how you design (...) a module or how you design a programme, they're a-a-actually (...) helpful and reinforce the elements of the programme. Urm (...) our achieving (...) c- these key c- key characteristics which you might (high tone) not think about some of

them are quite abstract. (...) Urm (...) but it's almost like an added bonus and we're not under any (...) pressure (surprised) urm you know to design anything in a certain way to, to meet (...) these (softly spoken) it, it doesn't come into the design aspect of things it comes more into the reviewing.

I Okay (...) yes. Good yeah that makes sense. Urm (.....) so d- w- in the design process then do you think there are any constraints (...) that stop you designing the best ever journalism course (...) there could possibly be?

R (.....) Urm (.....) the main (high tone) constraint, I guess is resources (high tone) I mean if you talk to- y-you, you talk to people in, in a, in a range of different university settings and probably there are m-more urm (...) there are probably courses that are much more contact hours intensive. (...) Urm-

I Just want to put a number on the contact hours there?

R (...) It's really difficult to put a number on contact hours. (confused)

I Okay, that doesn't matter (high tone) I just-

R Urm it depends what could be-

I It's, sorry, w- y- it's-

R ...because c-contact comes in all sorts of different forms...

I Yeah sure okay, no I, it doesn't matter it's just when people say 'large and small' number of contact hours, of course they don't always mean the same numbers, so- (confused)

R Yeah (surprised) (...) but-

I But you th- urr-

R ...you know I c- urr I know for instance in other, in other further education, in, in higher education colleges that are teaching journalism (...) students might be used to being in all day, every day...

I Ooh yes, (high tone) yes, (surprised) yes, yeah, yes. (softly spoken)

R ...yeah, (confused) with, with, with their tutors...

I Mm.

R ...that's not the case here.

I In, in one room. (surprised)

R Yes i- (high tone) yeah, that's not the case here. (angry)

I No, no, no. (softly spoken)

R Urm that's the case here sometimes when they're doing news days...

I Yes.

R ...or when they're particularly intensive things going on. Urm but (...) you know it's much, it, it's much more of a balance between the traditional model of, of lectures, seminars, practicals. Urm (...) so if you talk to perhaps (...) some (...) some of the students they might say they want more contact time and they would, they-they think it would be best to have more contact time. (...) Whether that's the case or not with the kind of degree that they're coming out with (...) urm and, and, and the type of education they're getting which has a strong emphasis on independent learning...

I Yes.

R ...I would (...) question?

I Yes.

R So i- (...) you know urr obviously [sigh] (...) you want, you want in- or from the practical side you want to produce the best journalist possible but you know even if you did teach them all day every day there's probably more you could still do.

I Mm.

R And we are constrained in how, how much confrt- contact hours...

I Yes (high tone)

R ...we can (...) give and we already, out of the whole of (...) out of the ICS and out of the whole of the faculty (angry) (...) my programme already has some of the highest contact hours...

I Oh right okay (high tone) (.....) okay (softly spoken)

R And urr (...) you know that's, that's urr seen as problematic from some angles. (angry)

- I Oh right, yes. (....) Yes it's probably got more contact hours than philosophy? [slight laugh]**
- R Yes (happy) (high tone) [Laughter] I would bet my bottom dollar it has. (happy) (high tone)
- I Yes (happy) [slight laugh] urm yeah. (...) Well that's interesting, isn't it. (...) Urr (...) y-you did, (...) I think (confused) once or twice you've mentioned the BJTC (confused)...**
- R Yeah (high tone)
- I ...urm (...) just touch on how that (...) that interaction works and what, what that kind of does for the course but also what (...) obligations (angry) that puts on you? (softly spoken)**
- R Urm well yeah there's the obvious obligations of the guidelines that they urm (...) they have urm in terms of the- urr th- you know what minimum that we need to teach, the skills we need to teach urm (.....) the knowledge that, that the students have to have about media law (high tone) about politics, about urm urm they're now talking a lot about multiplatform journalism which we'd already responded to in our last accreditat- re-accreditation visit. (...) And (...) urr (...) the course was already being redesigned to incorporate a lot of multiplatform journalism. (...) Urm (...) and in fact we've just appointed urr somebody as a- a teaching fellow to teach that. Urm (high tone) so in that sense there's the guidelines, urm (.....) what was the question again? (high tone) (happy) [slight laugh]
- I [slight laugh] Well that, yes that was a- obviously you thought it was- because it doesn't have to have accreditation, but you thought it was...**
- R Yeah. (high tone)
- I ...worth it for your course, for here? [0:37:29.9] [over speaking]**
- R Yeah I can't remember when (high tone) we were first accredited but we were probably one of the longest standing y-...
- I Hmm.**
- R ...degree courses that's been accredited...

I Yes (high tone)

R ...we've been accredited for years and years (surprised). And we are one of the only broadcast journalism under graduate courses that is accredited because a lot of the broadcast journalism courses are urr at an MA level.

I Yes.

R Urm (...) so yes we do (high tone) think it's valuable. Urm (...) it's valuable (...) urm (...) because (...) it helps us keep up with what the industry needs, so the guidelines and their advice helps us with that. Although not as much, I should say, may say as it should. (confused)

I Right.

R Although things are changing in the BJTC in, in urr at the moment which I'm sure you-

I They are.

R ...other people have talked to you about.

I Yes, yes (softly spoken)

R Urm and they are trying to urm you know become more professional and provide more guidance and I think urm try to keep up with the changes, I think (...) they've actually lagged behind, almost more than some of the university [slight laugh] degree courses that they've been accrediting. (happy)

I Yes well, 'cause that's, I mean that, kind of where I'm going with this is...

R Yeah (high tone)

I ...to whether or not there's a (...) urm (...) a tension between a research-led Russell Group institution (...) and an industry accrediting body? (confused)

R Yeah (high tone)

I And I mean...

R There is, there's cert- there's certainly a tension (angry) urm (...) we (...) we value their accreditation urm (...) because it- one of the major things it does is it helps us market our degree and it, it, it gives us a unique-...

I To the mums and dads? (confused)

R To the mums and dads and (high tone) to the students it gives us a unique selling point that we are the only broadcast journalism degree where you come out and you don't have to do a fourth year, by going and doing an MA. So that's another year you don't have to pay for, you can go straight into industry. The BJTC (high tone) help us, the, the probably the most important thing they do is help us get placements for our students for work experience because we have a- as part of their guidelines and obvious- and also because it's just obvious that it's beneficial (angry) the students go on a three week placement in summer...

I Mm (surprised) (softly spoken)

R ...between second and third year and the BJTC are integral to a, to urm ensuring (angry) those places with the...

I Yeah (softly spoken)

R ...the B- BBC. Urm (...) there is a (high tone) tension (...) between (...) being in a Russell Group university and, and the BJTC guidelines because of the breadth (high tone) of different institutions which they accredit. And they're trying to apply the same set of guidelines to those as they are to us, so (...) urm they try to apply the same guidelines to urm urr post graduate (...) c- one year course where you might e-expect to be urm (...) trained (angry) (...) basically as a journalist rather than educated (confused)...

I Mm. (softly spoken)

R ...and it would be urr like I said in every day, intensive training...

I Mm (softly spoken)

R ...urm and they kind of expect us to, to match (high tone) that which we can't.

I Yeah (high tone) (softly spoken)

R Urm-

I Y-you don't want to (high tone)

R ...and we can't (high tone) and we don't want to either, no and urm (...) I'm not sure h- quite (high tone) how that's going to turn out because urr (...) it's a mutually beneficial (high tone) relationship...

- I** **Well (confused) yes I mean that's, that (...) [0:40:37.1]**
[over speaking]
- R So the-
- I** **...in my mind was, was (...) was where the power lies here**
(angry) because presumably it's not just the case of (...)
with BJTC saying things, they ought to be urr but you
presumably (...) would have some influence over (...) urr
what the accreditation process is (high tone) too th- I
mean they- (...) they will listen?
- R They y-y- well- (high tone)
- I** **They ought too. (angry)**
- R Y-you would h- you would hope so yes (...) yes.
- I** **I mean it's not just they're telling you what to do.**
- R No (...) urm (...) but (...) my, my particular interactions with them so far
have only been over the last 18 months...
- I** **Sure (softly spoken)**
- R ...when they urr you know and, and they've been quite minimal 'cause
we've just been reaccredited...
- I** **Yes.**
- R Urm but I think things are changing and I think they're going- you know
things are changing for us (...) and things are changing for them...
- I** **Yes (softly spoken)**
- R ...and they need to recognise that just as much as, as we do.
- I** **Yeah (high tone) (softly spoken)**
- R Urm and urr we'll just have to see what happens (high tone) really.
- I** **Yeah (softly spoken)**
- R But they're facing (...) competition.
- I** **Well they are I mean NJTC of course has been around (...)**
longer (confused) even I think (softly spoken)

- R Yeah (high tone) (...) and, and NJTC are remarketing themselves very (angry) much as a as multiplatform journalism.
- I Yes. M-
- R And they're slightly ahead of the game, I'd say-
- I **I was thinking along somewhere BJTC territory?**
- R Yeah.
- I **Yeah. (...) well it would be interesting to see how it works out? (high tone)**
- R Y-yeah I mean fr- urr [sigh] whether it ends up being one organisation (...) I, I don't know whether that's a possibility but (...) urm (confused) ...
- I **Hmm (high tone) (softly spoken)**
- R ...you know it, it's valuable but I think they need to, they need to up their game and they need to urm (...) make sure that they're recognising changes, not just in industry but in academia as well.
- I **Yes. (...) yeah (...) yeah interesting, okay urm (...) (softly spoken) sorry jumping around a bit but urr (...) have we said enough about the practical work element in the course urm (...) w- (...) when I ask people (...) the straight forward question "why do you have practical work in your course?"**
- R Yeah.
- I **...They actually give me different answers.**
- R Okay (happy) (high tone) [slight laugh]
- I **[slight laugh] So it seems like a simple question, (...) why do you have (happy) [slight laugh] practical work in your course? What's it there for?**
- R [sigh] Well to develop journalistic skills (...) urm without actually doing practicing journalism and actually putting reports together or making a short (...) TV piece or i- editing your own radio...
- I **Right (softly spoken)**

- R ...item together there's no way that the students are going to have any experience of (...) urr...
- I Right (softly spoken)**
- R ...enough structured experience of doing it, I mean a lot of them do urm work in the student media that we have which is all brilliant and award-winning...
- I Of course yes.**
- R ...we've got <university> student newspaper, <university> student radio (high tone) (angry) <university> student TV urr lots of them go off and get placements in local (...) media organisations but (...) yeah (high tone) the practical element is very, very important.
- I Right. (softly spoken) And (...) is (...) how compartmentalised is it, or, or is there a relationship between (...) the academic theory part of it and the practical work? How do they (...) stick together? (high tone)**
- R Yeah (high tone) there's a strong relationship between the two and this is something that when we've redesigned the curriculum we've urm (...) designed (angry) the modules (...) w- we designed urm lots of the modules to teach them in tandem (...) in a way that integrates them. So for instance in the first year, they do two (...) modules one in semester one and one in semester two, one is called introduction to journalism and the other one is journalism new skills. And in both of those modules the teaching structure is lectures (surprised) seminars and practicals. (...) And in those lectures they're taught urr to (...) about you know what is journalism, let's critically reflect on it, what about urr a little bit of introduction to ethics, a little bit of introduction to law, a little bit of urm well you know news values, how- what are they, how are they changing, (confused) how do they actually influence what journalists select? In the seminars (high tone) they're reflecting on academic readings along the lines of those topics urm and in the practicals (high tone) they're having their first introduction to actually how to do journalism. So they- they're going out and, and, and doing voxpops, they're learning how to use the, the technical equipment. But they're (...) reflecting on, they're trying to integrate what they're being taught into that practice. And that, that's happening more and more across our modules we are all integrating (...) that (...) urm (...) to s- urr another new model which is starting next week which is multimedia journalism and that's (...) again, it's going to be a (...) a combination (angry) so in that they're expected to write an essay (high tone) about multimedia...
- I Mm (softly spoken)**

R ...journalism. But at the same time they're going to be urm collecting and, and, and, and (...) producing a multi (...) media piece.

I **Right (softly spoken) (...) yeah okay. (...) That's good, that's helpful. (high tone) (...) Nearly there now (happy) [slight laugh]**

R [slight laugh] Okay (happy)

I **Urm (...) I think once you highlight [0:45:17.7] [unclear] b- because we, we're all (...) thinking about what does £9,000 (...) mean and-?**

R Yeah. (high tone)

I **...we're with the impact of that and (...) it be interesting to get your (...) take on (...) the way that's working out? (high tone)**

R What does it mean for the students...

I **Y-y-y- (...) well...(high tone)?**

R ...point of view or from- I have urr- w-

I **Well (high tone) from both really, it's- j-**

R [cough]

I **...does it change students' perceptions of- (...) well the courses about? (high tone)**

R I certainly change students' perceptions, students feel they want value for money (angry) (...) they have certain expectations of what they should (angry) be getting of the, if you want the service they should be getting. (confused) Urm (...) I think students (high tone) themselves (...) also feel under a lot of pressure to achieve (...) higher grades and come out with the minimum of a 2/1...

I **Yes.**

R ...urm (...) because they feel they are paying (angry) for it and that somehow they, th-this (...) means they must (angry) achieve (...) more...

I **Mm .**

R ...(...) urm (.....) that has some unfortunate consequences on our relationship with them and the way that they view lecturers and, and, and urm tutors and the way that they view learning because (...) they sometimes have the attitude of not actually (high tone) seeming to be that interested in developing their understanding and (high tone) knowledge (...) and more interested in how do I get a 2:1, how do I get a first and I- they come and sit down and ask me (...) "I've got this essay plan, (...) will it get me a first?"

I **[slight laugh]**

R ...(...) Urm [slight laugh] (...) and urm it also has implications urm (...) in terms of (...) student satisfaction, (...) urm an recruitment being (...) key priorities for us. In (high tone) the past urm we were (...) able to be very, very selective about urm students and they had to market themselves to us. But the environment is changing (high tone) because of the effect (angry) of the £9,000 fees, less (angry) students are applying...

I **Mm.**

R ...everybody is in- the, the other (...) you know th- thing is the government are manipulating things by m-making these quota systems for students who have 2 As and a B and you're getting more or less money for [0:47:21.5] [over speaking] ...

I **That's my next quesiton. (happy)**

R ...all, all that kind of thing so (...) urm (...) it means that (...) urm you know we're, we're (.....) we're marketing ourselves to, to, to recruit the, the best students. (...) Urm (.....) so (.....) yeah but from, from our point of view it's, it's, it's quite difficult because (...) the students almost feel that we werent getting any money before (...) and now we are getting £9,000 (angry)...

I **[0:47:51.8] [over speaking]**

R ...so we should be giving them more? (confused) (...) They don't understand that actually in some cases we are getting less (angry) than we were before, it's just the money comes in through the letterbox...

I **Mm (softly spoken) (...) yes. (high tone)**

R ...in a different way.

I **Yes indeed. Urm (...) but does NSS (...) become (...) more significant then?**

R Yeah (high tone) so it's part of the recruitment (...) process we need to make sure that our course has a good reputation amongst ex-students and amongst students who are currently here (high tone) and (...) urm (...) I guess also (high tone) I mean we shouldn't forget that (...) we are human beings and we understand that they're paying £9,000 and that we want to give them the best, we (high tone) always want to give them the best...

I **Mm.**

R ...but (...) you know we, we even more (angry) so probably want to make sure that they feel (surprised) they are getting the best education and (high tone) urr that (...) we are doing the right thing (confused) so urm (...) student feedback has become far more important.

I **Okay (surprised) (...) because that's a thing that's (...) almost every university struggles with in their assess core? (high tone)**

R Urm (...) th- I mean, I mean feedback from students (angry) rather than yeah I mean urr we-

I **Oh I see (high tone) yes. (surprised)**

R ...we have to c- we, we- it's important...

I **[0:48:58.8] [over speaking]**

R ...for us to make sure that we get our feedback to them right...

I **Yes, yes that's...**

R ...(confused) and that we- yeah that we are making sure that, that-

I **...sorry that's what I thought you meant.**

R ... Yeah, no f-feedback from students so we have student-staff committee...

I **Yeah.**

R ...and (...) I'm regularly talking to students to, you know to make sure that you know (softly spoken) (...) essentially they don't perceive that anything is going wrong (surprised) or not, on our course. And we will react quite quickly (...) in urm (...) making (high tone) sure that either they understand (...) urr the circumstances of what's happening and why it's not possible for instance for them to have a, a drinks machine downstairs when they think they should (happy)...

I Yeah. (happy)

R ...or you know if it's more serious...

I Yeah.

R ...that, that we are doing something about it.

I Mm. Hmm (surprised) okay (...) yes that's... (softly spoken)

R And that's, that's quite a big part of my role actually. (high tone)

I Yes (high tone) (surprised) (...) urm (.....) you know the- that (...) for programme leaders in general that probably has to be big...

R Yeah, (high tone) yeah.

I Urm (...) yeah all seem to be big part of it. (softly spoken) (...) Yes, (high tone) sorry and you- and as you hinted at you got (...) urm this AAB business is-

R Yeah (high tone)

I ...causing (...) urm (softly spoken)

R It's, it's n- it's not-

I C- d- y- it's not being able to predict how it will work out (...) or (softly spoken) ? (confused)

R It's- yeah I mean it's (high tone) an uncertain time urm (...) we're really fortunate in that as the broadcast journalism degree (...) as (...) in the past, has been the highest recruiting degree within the ICS (...) with the highest achieving students...

I Mm (softly spoken)

R ...so actually (high tone) (...) last year when we got less students than were expected achieving the grades they'd been offered on other degree (...) courses, we were able to take a few more students than we'd anticipated (confused) to make up the numbers in the ICS. And we out of all (high tone) the degree courses in the ICS are most likely to get (...) applicants that are going to achieve AAB or above...

I Yes (softly spoken)

- R And so urm (.....) we're able (...) t-to take them but gain the advantages of that, it's not (...) it's not so frightening for us as it might be for s-people at other universities...
- I **Yes. (softly spoken)**
- R ...I'd have thought. (confused)
- I **Yes (softly spoken) (...) yes. Urm (...) yeah (.....) urr i-it, it does seem to be (.....) urr because if you've had a, if you've urr historically had a (...) higher number of AABs (confused) urr you then have a bigger stake in the new system.**
- R Yeah (angry)
- I **Universities which (...) frankly have never had any AABs (high tone)...**
- R Yeah (high tone)
- I **...don't, don't have- they have different problems but they don't have that problem. (confused)**
- R Yeah (.....) yeah.
- I **Yeah.**
- R Yeah.
- I **Yeah, yeah urm but it- it raises your (softly spoken) stake in the game, I guess?**
- R Yeah. (high tone) Yeah.
- I **Yes. Interesting. (...) Urr okay (...) urr it's- we're on an hour, how- but I just didn't want to leave it-**
- R That's okay.
- I **...didn't want to leave it urm (...) so I've kind of (...) used some prompts to talk about s-some of the m-main areas that occur to me, but I didn't want to walk away, if there was a- a nugget of gold about...**
- R [slight laugh]

- I ...all of this stuff that you could have told me (happy) [slight laugh]**
- R Yeah that I haven't. (happy)
- I That I haven't, so it doesn't have to be but I- (happy)**
- R Urm... (happy)
- I Urm (...) just interesting to get you-**
- R I d- I don't-
- I ...your wider reflection on this area? (high tone)**
- R I think you've (high tone) picked up on quite a lot of the, you know the, the differences between us and urr other (...) degree programmes, really. Urm (...) no I think overall, journalism degrees (surprised) are facing big challenges and that's because journalism (high tone) is facing big challenges.
- I Mm (softly spoken)**
- R Urm (softly spoken) (...) as a whole the university sectors are having to cope with urr unprecedented (high tone) changes (angry) (...) urm (...) some of those (...) are making things very difficult, it is very difficult to predict what's going to happen in the future with our admissions numbers...
- I Mm (confused) (softly spoken)**
- R ...urm (.....) and at the same time (...) we are having to run (angry) a bit faster to keep up with changes in journalism to make sure that not only our practice based teaching is making sure the students have up-to-date skills and knowledge (...) but also our research (high tone) is up to date as well...
- I Yeah (softly spoken) yes. (high tone)**
- R ...because (...) that's changing too. (confused) So th-there's- it's a ch- it is a challenging, I would say it's, it's a much more challenging degree to be (...) programme leader of than (...) a standard media and communications degree. Definitely. (angry)
- I Mm (softly spoken)**

R And th-the balance between practical and theoretical (...) is something that is (...) urm (...) I don't want to use the word 'challenging' (angry) again because I've just said it lots of times (happy) (high tone)...

I **[slight laugh]**

R ...[slight laugh] but it's tricky (happy) (...) you know it, it is tricky it means there are lots of things we have to consider, I mean even (high tone) down to a (...) nitty gritty level (...) of making sure that we've got enough radio recorders (...) and (...) you know that the computers are working...

I **Yeah (softly spoken)**

R ...if you're- that, that takes up...

I **Yes, yes (high tone)**

R ... we have a technical resources committee (high tone)...

I **Yes.**

R ...(...) that takes up time. (angry)

I **Yeah. (...) And urm (...) well urr urr (...) I'll guess (angry) that actually those kind of things can be quite important in terms of student satisfaction? (confused)**

R Yes (surprised).

I **Urr-**

R Th-they're hugely important.

I **Urm (...) it'll take urr longer to notice (...) that you haven't got (...) someone hasn't got their four papers into the reference (happy) [slight laugh]**

R Yeah (high tone)

I **Urr but they'll very quickly notice [slight laugh] if (happy) (...) urm-**

R We haven't got enough kit (high tone)...

I **And urr-**

- R ...or even you know that, that, that it's taking too long to queue up to get the kit out. (high tone)
- I **Yeah.**
- R Because of the s- procedures that they have to do (angry) that. Urm so (...) yeah (high tone) th-that's there's lot of things like that that have constantly changing and making sure that we've got l-like most up date, up to date cameras you have to plan quite a lot in advance. (angry) To make sure we've got the budget for those (...) and the uncertainty of recruitment numbers makes that difficult as well. (confused)
- I **You're just talking about my life now (happy) [slight laugh]**
- R Yeah [slight laugh]
- I **It's what I do! (happy) [slight laugh]**
- R This is- what- what- l- l- y-you are you head of school at-
- I **Yes.**
- R That's right okay so [slight laugh] you- (happy) you know all this (happy) [slight laugh]
- I **[slight laugh] Urm-**
- R You just want people's- other quotes to prove it? (happy) [slight laugh]
- I **Well (high tone) there's an element of that to it urr b-but urm (.....) but it's, it's not very sound research to just take your own ideas and urr write them down. (happy) [slight laugh]**
- R No, no, no I'm only joking. I'm only joking (happy)
- I **Urm because you, you (...) you see things, some things differently.**
- R Yeah (high tone) th-
- I **Of course.**
- R ...definitely, definitely. And I mean s-
- I **Urm and other people do...**
- R Yeah, yeah.

I ...I've been to all sorts of different places and, and the whole beauty of it is that when I ask these questions they all give me different answers, so...

R Yeah. (high tone)

I ...that's great. (...) Urr it gives me something to write about.

R Yeah, yeah.

I Yes. On which note (...) I'll urr-

R So did you know <former colleague>? (confused)

I Oh yes. (surprised) Yes.

Short pause (...) – up to 3 seconds

Medium pause (.....) up to 5 seconds

Long pause (.....) up to 10 seconds

(high tone) high pitch speech

(softly spoken) softly spoken

(confused) confused

(angry)

(happy)

(surprised)